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By

ARTHUR H. SAVORY

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GRAIN AND CHAFF FROM AN ENGLISH MANOR

BY

ARTHUR H. SAVORY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO.
1921

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN.

"Ah, what a life were this! how sweet! how lovely!
Gives not the hawthorn-bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery!"
3 King Henry VI.

"When I paused to lean on my hoe, these sounds and sights I heard and saw anywhere in the row, a part of the inexhaustible entertainment which the country offers."—THOREAU.

"Life is sweet, brother. . . . There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise the wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?"—BORROW: *Jasper Petulengro.*

PREFACE

As a result of increased facilities within the last quarter of a century for the exploration of formerly inaccessible parts of the country, interest concerning our ancient villages has been largely awakened. Most of these places have some unwritten history and peculiarities worthy of attention, and an extensive literary field is thus open to residents with opportunities for observation and research.

Such records have rarely been undertaken in the past, possibly because those capable of doing so have not recognized that what are the trivial features of everyday life in one generation may become exceptional in the next, and later still will have disappeared altogether.

Gilbert White, who a hundred and thirty years ago published his *Natural History of Selborne*, was the first, and I suppose the most eminent, historian of any obscure village, and it is surprising, as his book has for so long been regarded as a classic, that so few have attempted a similar record. His great work remains an inspiring ideal which village historians can keep in view, not without some hope of producing a useful description of country life as they have seen it themselves.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge with grateful thanks the kind help of friends and correspondents which I have received in writing this book. Mr. Warde Fowler was good enough to look through the chapters while still in manuscript, and I have also received great help from Mr. Herbert A. Evans, who has read through the proofs. The help of others—besides those whose names I give in the text—has been less general and mostly confined to some details in the historical part of the first chapter, and to portions of the subject-matter of the last. Mr. Hugh Last, Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, most kindly gave much valuable time to the examination of the Roman coins and assigning them to their respective reigns; he contributed also the notes on the Emperors, with special reference to the events in Britain which occurred during their reigns. Mr. Dudley F. Nevill of Burley helped me in a variety of ways, and Mr. C. A. Binyon of Badsey supplied some of the historical details and information about the ancient roads.

Looking back over the years I spent at Aldington, I see much more sunshine and blue sky than cloud and storm, notwithstanding the difficulties of the times. It is a continual source of pleasure to go over the familiar fields in imagination and to recall the kindly faces of my loyal and willing labourers. I trust that what I have written of them will make plain my grateful remembrance of their unfailing sympathy and ready help.

ARTHUR H. SAVORY.

BURLEY, HANTS.
January, 1920.

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GRAIN AND CHAFF FROM AN ENGLISH MANOR

CHAPTER I

ALDINGTON VILLAGE—THE MANOR HOUSE—THE FARM

> "There's a divinity that shapes our ends."
> *Hamlet.*
>
> "Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns."
> *Morte d'Arthur.*

In recalling my earliest impressions of the village of Aldington, near Evesham, Worcestershire, the first picture that presents itself is of two chestnut-trees in full bloom in front of the Manor House which became my home, and their welcome was so gracious on that sunny May morning that it inclined me to take a hopeful view of the inspection of the house and land which was the object of my visit.

The village took its name from the Celtic *Alne*, white river; the Anglo-Saxon, *ing*, children or clan; and *ton*, the enclosed place. The whole name, therefore, signified "the enclosed place of the children, or clan, of the Alne." There are many other Alnes in England and Scotland, also Allens and Ellens as river names, probably corruptions of Alne, and we have many instances of the combination of a river name with *ing* and *ton*, such as Lymington and Dartington. The Celtic *Alne* points to the antiquity of the place, and there were extensive traces of Roman occupation to which I shall refer later.

The village was really no more than a hamlet ecclesiastically attached to the much larger village of Badsey. In addition to Celtic, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon associations, it figured before the Norman Conquest in connection with the Monastery and Abbey of Evesham, the Manor and the mill being mentioned in the Abbey records; and they were afterwards set down in Domesday Survey.

The Vale of Evesham, in which Aldington is situated, lies at the foot of the Cotswold Hills, and when approached from them a remarkable change in climate and appearance is at once noticeable. Descending from Broadway or Chipping Campden—that is, from an altitude of about 1,000 feet to one of 150 or less—on a mid-April day, one exchanges, within a few miles, the grip of winter, grey stone walls and bare trees, for the hopeful greenery of opening leaves and thickening hedges, and the withered grass of the Hill pastures for the luxuriance of the Vale meadows.

The earliness of the climate and the natural richness of the land is the secret of the intensive cultivation which the Vale presents, and year by year more and more acres pass out of the category of farming into that of market-gardening and fruit-growing. The climate, however, though invaluable for early vegetable crops, is a source of danger to the fruit. After a few days of the warm, moist greenhouse temperature which, influenced by the Gulf Stream, comes from the south-west up the Severn and Avon valleys, between the Malverns and the Cotswolds, and which brings out the plum blossom on thousands of acres, a bitter frost sometimes occurs, when the destruction of the tender bloom is a tragedy in the Vale, while the Hills escape owing to their more backward development.

The Manor House had been added to and largely altered, but many years had brought it into harmony with its surroundings, while Nature had dealt kindly with its colouring, so that it carried the charm of long use and continuous human habitation. Behind the house an old walled garden, with flower-bordered grass walks under arches of honeysuckle and roses, gave vistas of an ample mill-pond at the lower end, forming one of the garden boundaries. The pond was almost surrounded by tall black poplars which stretched protecting arms over the water, forming a wide and lofty avenue extending to the faded red-brick mill itself, and whispering continuously on the stillest summer day. The mill-wheel could be seen revolving and glittering in the sunlight, and the hum of distant machinery inside the mill could be heard. The brook, which fed the pond, was fringed by ancient pollard willows; it wound through luxuriant meadows with ploughed land or cornfields still farther back. The whole formed a peaceful picture almost to the verge of drowsiness, and reminded one of the "land in which it seemèd always afternoon."

The space below the house and the upper part of the garden immediately behind it was occupied by the rick-yard, reaching to the mill and pond, and a long range of mossy-roofed barns divided it from the farmyard with its stables and cattle-sheds.

The village occupied one side only of the street, as it was called—the street consisting of two arms at a right angle, with the Manor House near its apex. The cottages were built, mostly in pairs, of old brick, and tiled, having dormer windows, and gardens in front and at the sides, well stocked with fruit-trees and fruit-bushes, and this helped the cottagers towards the payment of their very moderate rents, which had remained the same, I believe, for the best part of half a century.

Throughout all the available space not so occupied, on either side of the two arms of the street, and again behind the cottages themselves, beautiful old orchards, chiefly of apple-trees, formed an unsurpassed setting both when the blossom was out in pink and white, or the fruit was ripening in gold and crimson, and even in winter, when the grey limbs and twisted trunks of the bare trees admitted the level rays of the sun.

The farm consisted of about 300 acres of mixed arable and grass land on either side of two shallow valleys, along which wandered the main brook and its tributary, uniting, where the valleys joined, into one larger stream, so that all the grass land was abundantly supplied with water for the stock. These irregular brooks, bordered throughout their whole course with pollard willows, made a charming feature and gave great character to the picture.

In the records of Evesham Abbey we find the Manor, including the lands comprised therein, among the earliest property granted for its endowment. The erection of the Abbey commenced about 701, and William of Malmesbury, writing of the loneliness of the spot, tells us that a small church, probably built by the Britons, had from an early date existed there. In 709 sixty-five manses were given by Kenred, King of Mercia, leagued with Offa, King of the East Angles, including one in Aldinton (*sic*), and Domesday Survey mentions one hide of land (varying from 80 to 120 acres in different counties) in Aldintone (*sic*) as among the Abbey possessions at the time of the Norman Conquest.

Abbot Randulf, who died in 1229, built a grange at Aldington, and bought Aldington mill, in the reign of Henry III., when the hamlet was a *berewic* or corn farm held by the Abbey; and at the time of the Dissolution it was granted to Sir Philip Hoby, who appears to have been an intimate of Henry VIII., together with the Abbey buildings themselves and much of its other landed property.

The Manor remained in the hands of the Hoby family for many years, and was one of Sir Philip's principal seats. Freestone from the Abbey ruins seems to have been largely used for additions probably made in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, for in some alterations I made about 1888, I found many carved and moulded stones, built into the walls, evidently the remains of arches from an ecclesiastical building, and Sir Philip Hoby is known to have treated the Abbey ruins as if they were nothing better than a stone quarry.

Leland, who by command of Henry VIII. visited Evesham very soon after the Dissolution, says that there was "noe towene" at Evesham before the foundation of the Abbey, and the earliest mention of a bridge there is recorded in monastic chronicles in 1159.

There is a notice of a Mr. Richard Hoby, youngest brother of Sir Philip, as churchwarden in 1602, and a monument, much dilapidated, is to be seen in the chancel of Badsey Church, erected to the memory of his wife and that of her first husband by Margaret Newman, their daughter, who married Richard Delabere of Southam, Warwickshire, in 1608. Aldington afterwards became the property of Sir Peter Courtene, who was created a baronet in 1622.

Another explanation of the origin of the carved and moulded stones mentioned above may be found in the former existence of a chapel at Aldington, for there is evidence that a chapel existed there immediately before the Dissolution. In an article in Badsey Parish Magazine by Mr. E. A. B. Barnard, F.S.A., brought to my notice by the editor, the Rev. W. C. Allsebrook, Vicar, details are given of the will of Richard Yardley of Awnton (Aldington), dated January 22, 1531, in which the following bequests are made:

> To the Mother Church of Evesham, 2s.
> To the Church of Badsey, a strike of wheat.
> To the Church of Wykamford, one strike of barley.
> To the Chappell at Awnton, one hog, one strike of wheat, and one strike of barley.

The chapel, however, disappeared, and seems to have been superseded by the assignment of the transept of Badsey Church as the Aldington Chapel, and in 1561–62 the first churchwarden for Aldington was elected at Badsey. The assignment may, however, have been only a return to a much earlier similar arrangement when the transept was added to Badsey Church about the end of the thirteenth century, possibly expressly as a chapel for Aldington.

That it was an addition is proved by the remains of the arch over a small Norman window in the north wall of the nave, which had to be cut into to allow of the opening into the new transept. A shelf or ledge is still to be seen in the east wall of the transept, probably the remains of a super-altar, and, to the right of it, a piscina on the north side of the chancel arch, and therefore inside the transept.

A large square pew and a smaller one behind it in the transept were for centuries the recognized seats of the Aldington Manor family and their servants, and so remained until the restoration of the church in 1885, when the pews were taken down and a row of chairs as near as possible to the old position was allotted for the use of the same occupants.

In 1685 the Jarrett monument was placed immediately over the larger pew in the east wall of the transept, bearing the following inscription:

> Near this place lies interred in hope
> of a joyful Resurrection the bodies of
> WILLIAM JARRETT
> of Aldington in this Parish Gent, aged 73
> years, who died Anno Domini 1681
> and of Jane his wife the daughter of William
> Wattson of Bengeworth Gent, who died
> Anno Domini 1683, aged 73 years,
> by whom he had Issue three Sons
> and two Daughters. Thomas Augustin and
> Jane ley buried here with them and
> Mary the youngest Daughter Married
> Humphrey Mayo of hope in the County
> of Herreford Gent, and William
> the Eldest Son Marchant in London
> set this Monument in a dutiful
> and affectionate memory of them 1685.

It is pleasant to think of William, the eldest son, " marchant," returning in his prosperity to the quiet old village, braving the dangers and inconveniences of unenclosed and miry roads, and riding the 100 odd miles on horseback, to revisit the scenes of his childhood, in order to do honour to the memories of his father and mother. What a contrast to the crowded streets of London the old place must have presented, and one has an idea that perhaps he regretted, in spite of his success in commerce, that he had not elected in his younger days to pursue the simple life.

The monument is a somewhat elaborate white marble tablet with a plump cherub on guard, and with many of the scrolls and convolutions typical of the Carolean and later Jacobean taste. This monument was removed to the north wall of the nave two centuries later, in 1885, when the church was restored, to allow of access to the new vestry then added.

William Jarrett, senr., and his wife lived through the very stirring times of the Civil War in the reign of Charles I., about twenty miles only from Edgehill, where, in 1642, twelve hundred men are reported to have fallen. It is said that on the night of the anniversary of the battle, October 23, in each succeeding year the uneasy ghosts of the combatants resume the unfinished struggle, and that the clash of arms is still to be heard rising and falling between hill and vale. The worthy couple must have almost heard the echoes of the Battle of Worcester in 1651, only eighteen miles distant, and have been well acquainted with the details of the flight of Charles II., who, after he left Boscobel, passed very near Aldington on his way to the old house at Long Marston, where he spent a night, and, to complete his disguise, turned the kitchen spit. This old house is still standing, and is regarded with reverence.

The cherub on the Jarrett tablet bears a strong resemblance to two similar cherubs which support a royal crown carved on the back of an old walnut chair which I bought in the village in a cottage near the Manor House. The design is well known as commemorating the restoration of Charles II. in 1660, and I like to think that in bringing it back I restored it to its old home, and that William Jarrett, senr., who was doubtless a Royalist, enjoyed a peaceful pipe on many a winter's night therein enthroned. I noticed, lately, in a description of a similar chair in the *Connoisseur*, that the cherubs are spoken of as *amorini ;* I have always understood that they are angelic beings supporting or guarding the sacred crown of the martyred King, though possibly the appellation is not unsuitable if they are to be regarded in connection with Charles II. alone.

There is a story of a hosiery factory established by refugee Huguenots at the date of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685, and the Jacobean building adjoining the east end of the Manor House is probably the place referred to. Later it became a malthouse, and later still was converted into hop-kilns by me. Being of Huguenot descent myself, I take a special interest in this tradition.

In 1715 Aldington took its part in preparing to resist the Jacobites, and the following record is copied from an old manuscript:

A Bill for y^{e} Constable of Anton dun by me Wm. Phipps.

	£	s.	d.
1 musket and bayonet	1	0	0
1 cartridg box at	0	3	6
1 belt at	0	5	0
for 1 scabard and cleaning y^{e} blad and blaking y^{e} hilt	0	3	6
	1	12	0

(*On the back.*)

	£	s.	d.
Three days pay	0	7	6
half A pound of pouder	0	0	8
for y^{e} muster master	0	0	6
for listing money	0	1	0
for drums and cullers	0	3	0
	2	4	8
Thos Rock Con^{ble} ..	0	12	8

(In) A True Account of y^{e} Cons^{bl} of Aldington charges for y^{e} yeare 171$^{6}_{5}$ Nov. y^{e} 7 & 8 1715 y^{e} charges for atending as Cons^{bl}

	s.	d.
bringing in y^{e} Train souldiers	3	0
spent when y^{e} soulders whent to Worcester	1	6

One can picture the scene in the little hamlet as Thomas Rock collected his forces at the gossip corner; the little crowd of admiring villagers and the martial bearing of the one recruit, as with "cullers" flying and drums beating he marched away, followed by the village children to the end of the lane.

William Tindal, in his *History of Evesham*, 1794, records the fact that in 1790 Aldington belonged to Lord Foley, but history is silent as to local events from that date until modern times, when, in the first half of the next century, the Manor became the property of an ancestor of the present owner. There is a tradition that the Manor House was a small but beautiful old building, with a high-pitched stone-slate roof and three gables in line at the front; but these disappeared, the pitch of the roof was reduced, and about 1850 the modern part of the house was added at the southern extremity of the old structure.

As the neighbouring parish of Wickhamford is referred to in connection with Badsey and Aldington several times in these pages, it may not be out of place to give the following inscription on the tombstone of a member of the Washington family. It is particularly of interest at the present time, more especially to Americans, and it has not, as far as I am aware, previously appeared in any other book.

INSCRIPTION

ON THE TOMBSTONE LYING ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE ALTAR, IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF WICKHAMFORD, NEAR EVESHAM, IN THE COUNTY OF WORCESTER, ENGLAND.

M. S.

PENELOPES

Filiæ perillustris & militari virtute clarissimi
Henrici Washington, collonelli,
Gulielmo Washington ex agro Northampton
Milite prognati;
ob res bellicosas tam Angl: quam Hiberniâ,
fortiter, & feliciter gestas,
Illustrissimis Principib: & Regum optimis
Carolo primo et secundo charissimi:
Qui duxit uxorem Elizabetham ex antiquâ, et
Generosâ prosapiâ Packingtoniensium
De Westwood;
Familiâ intemeratæ fidei in principes,
et amoris in patriam.
Ex præclaris hisce natalibus Penelope oriunda,
Divini Numinis summâ cum religione
Cultrix assidua;
Genetricis (parentum solæ superstitis)
Ingens Solatium;
ægrotantib. et egentib. mirâ promptitudine
Liberalis et benefica;
Humilis & casta, et soli Christo nupta;
Ex hac vitâ caducâ ad sponsum migravit
Febr. 27 An. Dom. 1697.

[*Translation*]

INSCRIPTION

ON THE TOMBSTONE LYING ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE ALTAR, IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF WICKHAMFORD, NEAR EVESHAM, IN THE COUNTY OF WORCESTER, ENGLAND.

Sacred to the memory of

PENELOPE,

daughter of that renowned and distinguished soldier, Colonel Henry Washington. He was descended from Sir William Washington, Knight, of the county of Northampton, who was highly esteemed by those most illustrious Princes and best of Kings, Charles the First and Second, for his valiant and successful warlike deeds both in England and in Ireland: he married Elizabeth, of the ancient and noble stock of the *Packingtons* of Westwood, a family of untarnished fidelity to its Prince and love to its country. Sprung from such illustrious ancestry, Penelope was a diligent and pious worshipper of her Heavenly Father. She was the consolation of her mother, her only surviving parent; a prompt and liberal benefactress of the sick and poor; humble and pure in spirit, and wedded to Christ alone.

From this fleeting life she migrated
to her Spouse,
February 27, *Anno Domini*, 1697.

CHAPTER II

THE FARM BAILIFF

> "If a job *has* to be done you may as well do it first as last."
> WILLIAM BELL.

THE labourers born and bred in the Vale of Evesham are mostly tall and powerful men, and mine were no exception; where the land is good the men compare favourably in size and strength with those in less favoured localities, and the same applies to the horses, cattle, and sheep; but the Vale, with its moist climate, does not produce such ruddy complexions as the clear air of the Hills, and even the apples tell the same story in their less brilliant colouring, except after an unusually sunny summer. In the days of the Whitsuntide gatherings for games of various kinds, sports, and contests of strength, the Vale men excelled, and certain parishes, famous for the growth of the best wheat, are still remembered as conspicuously successful.

My men, though grown up before education became compulsory, could all read and write, and they were in no way inferior to the young men of the present day. They were highly skilled in all the more difficult agricultural operations, and it was easy to find among them good thatchers, drainers, hedgers, ploughmen, and stockmen; they were, mostly, married, with families of young children, and they lived close to their work in the cottages that went with the farm. They exhibited the variations, usual in all communities, of character and disposition, and though somewhat prejudiced and wedded to old methods and customs they were open to reason, loyal, and anxious to see the land better farmed and restored to the condition in which the late tenant found it, when entering upon his occupation seven years previously.

The late tenant, my predecessor, though a gentleman and a pleasant man to deal with, was no farmer for such strong and heavy land as the farm presented; it was no fault of his, for the farmer, like the poet, is born, not made, and, as I was often told, he was " nobody's enemy but his own." His wife came of a good old stock of shorthorn breeders whose name is known and honoured, not only at home, but throughout the United States of America, our Dominions, and wherever the shorthorn has established a reputation; and my men were satisfied that she was the better farmer of the two.

I had scarcely bargained for the foul condition of the stubbles, disclosed when the corn was harvested shortly before I took possession at Michaelmas; they were overrun with couch grass—locally called " squitch "—and the following summer I had 40 acres of bare-fallow, repeatedly ploughed, harrowed, and cultivated throughout the whole season, which, of course, produced nothing by way of return. My predecessor had found that his arable land was approaching a condition in which it was difficult to continue the usual course of cropping, and had expressed his wish to one of the men that all the arable was grass. He was answered, I was told: " If you goes on as you be a-going it very soon will be !" I heard, moreover, that a farming relative of his, on inspecting the farm, shortly before he gave it up, had pronounced his opinion that it was " all going to the devil in a gale of wind !"

I soon recognized that I had a splendid staff of workers, and, under advice from the late tenant, I selected one to be foreman or bailiff. Blue-eyed, dark-haired, tall, lean, and muscular, he was the picture of energy, in the prime of life. Straightforward, unselfish, a natural leader of men, courageous and untiring, he immediately became devoted to me, and remained my right hand, my dear friend, and adviser in the practical working of the farm, throughout the twenty years that followed. Like many of the agricultural labourers, his remote ancestors belonged to a class higher in the social scale, and there were traditions of a property in the county and a family vault in Pershore Abbey Church. However this might be, William Bell was one of Nature's gentlemen, and it was apparent in a variety of ways in his daily life.

Shortly before my coming to Aldington he had received a legacy of £150, which, without any legal necessity or outside suggestion, he had in fairness, as he considered it, divided equally between his brother, his sister and himself—£50 each—and his share was on deposit at a bank. Seeing that I was young—I was then twenty-two—and imagining that some additional capital would be useful after all my outlay in stocking the farm and furnishing the house, he, greatly to my surprise and delight, offered in a little speech of much delicacy to lend me his £50. I was immensely touched at such a practical mark of sympathy and confidence, but was able to assure him gratefully that, for the present at any rate, I could manage without it. On another occasion, after a bad season, he voluntarily asked me to reduce his wages, to which of course I did not see my way to agree.

Bell was always ready with a smart reply to anyone inclined to rally him, or whom he thought inclined to do so; but his method was inoffensive, though from most men it would have appeared impertinent. In the very earliest days of my occupation the weather was so dry for the time of year—October and November—that fallowing operations, generally only possible in summer, could be successfully carried on, a very unusual circumstance on such wet and heavy land. Meeting the Vicar, a genial soul with a pleasant word for everyone, the latter remarked that it was "rare weather for the new farmers." Bell, highly sensitive, fancied he scented a quizzing reference to himself and to me, and knowing that the Vicar's own land—he was then farming the glebe with a somewhat unskilful bailiff—was getting out of hand, replied: "Yes, sir; and not so bad for some of the old uns." Bell happened to pass one day when I was talking to the Vicar at my gate. "Hullo! Bell," said he, "hard at work as usual; nothing like hard work, is there ?" "No, sir," said Bell; "I suppose that's why you chose the one-day-a-week job !"

Labourers have great contempt for the work of parsons, lawyers, and indoor workers generally; a farmer who spends much time indoors over correspondence and comes round his land late in the day is regarded as an "afternoon" or "armchair" farmer, and a tradesman who runs a small farm in addition to his other business is an "apron-string" farmer. With some hours daily employed on letter-writing, accounts and labour records, which a farm and the employment of many hands entails, and with frequent calls from buyers and sellers, I was sometimes unable to visit men working on distant fields until twelve o'clock or after, and I was told that it had been said of me by some new hands, "why don't 'e come out and do some on it ?"

It was remarked of the late tenant, "I reckon there was a good parson spoiled when 'e was made a farmer." And of a lawyer, who combined legal practice with the hobby of a small farm, that there was no doubt that "Lawyer G——s kept farmer G——s."

Bell's favourite saying was, "If a job *has* to be done you may as well do it first as last," and it was so strongly impressed upon me by his example that I think I have been under its influence, more or less, all my life. He was certain to be to the fore in any emergency when promptitude, courage, and resource were called for; he it was who dashed into the pool below the mill and rescued a child, and when I asked if he had no sense of the danger simply said that he never thought about it. It was Bell who tackled a savage bull which, by a mistaken order, was loose in the yard, and which, in the exuberance of unwonted liberty, had smashed up two cow-cribs, and was beginning the destruction of a pair of new barn doors, left open, and offering temptation for further activity. The bull, secured under Bell's leadership and manacled with a cart-rope, was induced to return to its home in peace. When felling a tall poplar overhanging the mill-pond, it was necessary to secure the tree with a rope fixed high up the trunk and with a stout stake driven into the meadow, to prevent the tree falling into the pond. Bell was the volunteer who climbed the tree with one end of the rope tied round his body and fixed it in position. He was always ready to undertake any specially difficult, dirty, or hazardous duty, and in giving orders it was never " Go and do it," but " Come on, let's do it." An example of this sort was not lost upon the men; they could never say they were set to work that nobody else would do, and their willing service acknowledged his tact.

One day a widow tenant asked me to read the will at the funeral of an old woman lying dead at the cottage next her own. I consented, and reached the cottage at the appointed time. It was the custom among the villagers, when there was a will, to read it before, not after, the ceremony, as, I believe, is the usual course. I found the coffin in the living-room and the funeral party assembled, and the will, on a sheet of notepaper, signed and witnessed in legal form, was put into my hands. Looking it through, I could see that there would be trouble, as all the money and effects were left to one person to the exclusion of the other members of the family, all of whom were present. It was quite simply expressed, and, after reading it slowly, I inquired if they all understood its provisions. " Oh yes," they understood it " well enough." I could see that the tone of the reply suggested some kind of reservation; I asked if I could do anything more for them. The reply was, " No," with their grateful thanks for my attendance; so, not being expected to accompany the funeral, I retired. I was no sooner gone than the trouble I had anticipated began, and the disappointed relatives expressed their disapproval of the terms of the will, some going so far as to decline to remain for the ceremony. Bell was not among the guests or the bearers, but, hearing raised voices at the cottage and guessing the cause, he boldly went to the spot, and in a few moments had, with the approval of the sole legatee, arranged an equal division of the money and goods; whereupon the whole party proceeded in procession to the church. I think no one else in the village could so easily have persuaded the favoured individual to forgo the legal claim; but Bell was no ordinary man, and his simple sincerity of purpose was so apparent, that his influence was not to be resisted. Later in the evening a plain, but very useful, old oak chest was sent to me, when the division of the furniture was arranged, as an acknowledgment of my services and in recognition of the saving of a lawyer's attendance and fee, with the thanks of the persons concerned. I was loath to accept it, but it was of course impossible to refuse such a delicate attention.

Bell's cheerfulness and his habit of making light of difficulties were very contagious. I had early recognized the seriousness of the problem presented by the foul condition of the land, but, as we gradually began to reduce it to better order, I remarked that the prospect was not so alarming after all. His reply was that when once the land was clean, and in regular cropping, " a man might farm it with all the playsure in life."

Though no " scholard," his wonderful memory stood him in good stead, and was most valuable to me. He came in for a talk every evening, to report the events of the day and arrange the work for the morrow. After a long day spent with one of the carters delivering such things as faggots—locally " kids "—of wood, he would recall the names of the recipients, and the exact quantities delivered at each house without the slightest effort. His only memoranda for approximate land measurements would be produced on a stick with a notch denoting each score yards or paces. This primitive method is particularly interesting, the numeral a *score* being derived from the Anglo-Saxon *sciran*, to divide. Similar words are plough *share*, *shire*, *shears*, and *shard*. He could keep the daily labour record when I was away from home; but though I could always decipher his writing, he found it difficult to read himself. A letter was a sore trial, and he often told me that he would sooner walk to " Broddy " (Broadway) and back, ten or eleven miles, than write to the veterinary surgeon there, whose services we sometimes required.

We had a simple method of disposing of small pigs; it was an understood thing that no pig was to be sold for less than a pound. I had a good breed, always in demand by the cottagers, who never failed to apply, sometimes, perhaps, before the pound size was quite reached, as it was a case of first come first served, and there was the danger that the best would be snapped up before an intending buyer could have his choice. Bell's face was wreathed in smiles when he came in and unloaded a pocketful of sovereigns on my study table, saying, when trade was brisk, "I could sell myself if I was little pigs!"

Many and anxious were the deliberations we held in the early days of my farming; the whole system of the late tenant was condemned by my theoretical and Bell's practical knowledge, but they did not invariably coincide, and, after a long discussion on some particular point, he would yield, though I could see that he was not convinced, with, "Well, I allows you to know best."

When, a few years later, I introduced hop-growing as a complete novelty on the farm, he regarded it at first as an extravagant and unprofitable hobby, akin to the hunters my predecessor kept. He "reckoned," he said, that my hop-gardens were my "hunting horse," and I heard that my neighbours quoted the old saw about "a fool and his money." Bell was not so enlightened as to be quite proof against local superstitions; I had to consult his almanac and find out when the "moon southed," and when certain planets were in favourable conjunction, before he would undertake some quite ordinary farm operations.

He was a clever and courageous bee-master, and "took" all my neighbours' swarms as well as my own, my gardener not being *persona grata* to bees. The job is not a popular one, and he would, when accompanied by the owner, always ask, "Will you hold the ladder or hive 'em?" The invariable answer was, "Hold the ladder." He firmly believed in the necessity of telling the bees in cases where the owner had died, the superstition being that unless the hive was tapped after dark, when all were at home, and a set form of announcement repeated, the bees would desert their quarters. I had an alarming experience once with bees when cycling between Ringwood and Burley in the New Forest, my present home. As I passed a house close to the road, a swarm crossed my path, rising from their hive just as I reached the hedge before the garden. There was a mighty humming, and I felt the bees, with which I was colliding, striking my hands and face with some violence. I expected a sting each moment, but my greatest fear was lest the queen should have settled on my coat amongst the bees it had collected, and that presently I should have the whole swarm in possession. It was dangerous to stop, so I raced on some distance, dismounted, discarded my coat, shaking off my unwelcome fellow-travellers, and I was much surprised to find that none of them retaliated.

Bell was an excellent brewer, and with good malt and some of our own hops could produce a nice light bitter beer at a very moderate cost. In years when cider was scarce we supplemented the men's short allowance with beer, 4 bushels of malt to 100 gallons; and for years he brewed a superior drink for the household, which, consumed in much smaller quantities and requiring to be kept longer, was double the strength. His methods were not scientific, and he scorned the use of a "theometer," his rule being that the hot water was cool enough for the addition of the malt when the steam was sufficiently gone off to allow him "to see his face" on the surface.

Owing to his having lived so long in such a quiet place, and the limited outlook which his surroundings had so far afforded, Bell was somewhat wanting in the sense of proportion, and when I had a field of 10 acres planted with potatoes, he told me quite seriously that he doubted if the crop could ever be sold, as he didn't think there were enough people in the country to eat them! I remember a parallel incident at the first auction sale of stock ever held at Chipping Campden, a lovely old town and, for centuries now long past, a leading centre of the Cotswold wool trade. The pens, in the wide spaces between the road and the footways, were, as I stood watching, rapidly filling with fat sheep, and, I suppose, the scene being so novel and so animated, the interest of the inhabitants was greatly excited, as they stood in little groups at the house doors looking on. I heard an ancient dame marvelling at the numbers of sheep collected—probably only 1,000 or 1,200 all told—and expressing her certainty of the impossibility of finding mouths enough to consume such a mass of mutton. As a matter of fact, there were, I suppose, four or five large dealers present, any one of whom would have bought every sheep, could he have seen a fair chance of a possible profit of threepence a head; to say nothing of innumerable smaller dealers and retail butchers, good for a score or two apiece. What I may call the parochial horizon is well illustrated, too, by the announcement of a domestic economist: "Farmer Jones lost two calves last week; I reckon we shall have beef a lot dearer." And again by the recommendation of a shrewd and ancient husbandman of my acquaintance that it was desirable for any young farmer to get away from home and visit the county town sometimes, at any rate on market days, and attend the "ordinary" dinner, even if it cost him a few shillings—"for there," he added, "you med stick and stick and stick at home until you knows nothin' at all." Shakespeare puts the matter more tersely, if less forcibly, "Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits." I cannot forbear, too, the temptation to recall *Punch's* picture at the time of King George's coronation. The scene depicted two rustics gossiping at the parish pump, as to the forthcoming village festivities, and the squire's carriage with the squire and his family, followed by the luggage cart, on their way to the railway station:

First Rustic. Where be them folks a-goin' to, I wonder ?

Second Rustic. Off to Lunnon, I reckon, but they'll be back for the Cor-o-nātion.

Soon after the reopening of the church I overtook Bell as we were returning from Sunday morning service. It was a dark day, and the pulpit, having been moved from the south to the north side of the nave—farther from the windows—the clerk lighted the desk candles before the Vicar began his sermon. I asked Bell how he liked the service, referring to the new choir and music; he hesitated, not wanting, as I was the Vicar's churchwarden, to appear critical, but being too conscientious to disguise his feelings. I could see that he was troubled, and asked what was the matter. Then it came out; it was "them candles!" which he took to be part of the ritual, and he added, "But you ain't a-goin' to make a Papist of me!"

Bell was proof against attempted bribery, and often came chuckling to me over his refusals of dishonest proposals. A man from whom I used to buy large quantities of hop-poles required some withy "bonds" for tying faggots; they are sold at a price per bundle of 100, and the applicant suggested that 120 should be placed in each bundle. Bell was to receive a recognition for his complicity in the fraud, and he agreed on condition that in my next deal for hop-poles 100 should be represented by 120 in like manner. The bargain did not materialize.

I found Bell a very amusing companion in walks and excursions we took to fairs and sales for the purchase of stock. He knew the histories and peculiarities of all the farmers and country people whose land or houses we passed, and his stories made the miles very short. I often helped with driving sheep and cattle home, and their persistence in taking all the wrong turnings or in doubling back was surprising; but two drovers are much more efficient than one, and we got to know exactly where they would need circumventing. When we visited a town I always took him to an inn or restaurant and gave him a good dinner. Visiting what was then a much-frequented dining-place—Mountford's, at Worcester, near the cathedral—we sat next to a well-known hon. and rev. scholar of eccentric habits. He would read abstractedly, forgetting his food for several minutes, then suddenly would make a noisy dash for knife and fork, resuming the meal with great energy for a while, and as suddenly relinquish the implements and return to his reading, and so on continuously. I noticed Bell watching with great surprise, much shocked at such unusual table manners, and presently he could not forbear very gently nudging my elbow to draw my attention to the performance.

Mountford's was celebrated for succulent veal cutlets with fried bacon and tomato sauce, also for Severn salmon and lamperns; visitors to the cathedral and china works generally refreshed themselves there, and it was amusing to watch their exhausted and grim looks when entering and waiting, in comparison with their beaming smiles when confessing their indulgences on leaving; for no bills were rendered, and guests were trusted to remember the details consumed. You will always find the best eating-houses near the cathedrals; vergers' recitals are apt to be long-winded, and visitors require speedy refreshment after a complete round.

It was a popular village belief that bad luck follows if a woman was the first to enter a house on Christmas morning, and Bell always made a point of being the first over my threshold, shouting loudly his greetings up the staircase.

Bell's wife survived him, living on in the same cottage in which he was born and had passed his life. She was a hard-working woman, and came over to my house once a week for some years to bake the bread, made from my own wheat ground at the village mill. It was somewhat dark in colour, owing to the most nutritious parts of the grain being retained in the flour, but it was deliciously sweet and kept fresh for the whole week. I only wish everyone could enjoy the same sort; the modern bread is poor stuff by comparison, and its lack of nutritive value is undoubtedly the cause of much of the poor physique of our rural and urban population at the present time.

I had a very human dog, Viper, partly fox-terrier; though not very "well bred," his manners were unexceptionable and his cleverness extraordinary. One summer afternoon Mrs. Bell was greatly surprised by Viper coming to her house much distressed and trying to tell her the reason; he was not to be put off or comforted, and, seizing her skirts, he dragged her to the door and outside. She guessed at once that her two boys were in some danger, and she followed the dog. He kept turning round to make sure that she was close behind, and led her down a lane, for perhaps 300 yards, to a gate leading into a 12-acre pasture. They pursued the footpath across the field, through another gate and over the bridge which spanned the brook, into a meadow beyond. There she found the children in fear of their lives from the antics of two mischievous colts which were capering round them with many snorts and much upturning of heels. It was really only play, but the boys were alarmed, and Viper, who had accompanied them, had evidently concluded that they were in danger.

Before the days of the safety bicycle an excellent tricycle, called the "omnicycle," was put on the market; and the villagers were greatly excited over one I purchased, of course only for road work, expecting me to use it on my farming rounds; and Mrs. Bell was heard to say, "I knows I shall laugh when I sees the master a-coming round the farm on that thing."

Bell always spoke of her as "my 'ooman," and, referring to the depletion of their exchequer on her returns from marketing in Evesham, often said, "I don't care who robs my 'ooman this side of the elm"—a notable tree about halfway between the town and the village—knowing that she would then have very little change left.

CHAPTER III

THE HOP FOREMAN AND THE HOP DRIER

> "Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
>
> . . . . .
>
> How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke."
>
> GRAY'S *Elegy*.

JARGE was one of the most prominent characters among my men. He was not a native of the Vale, coming from the Lynches, a hilly district to the north of Evesham. He was a sturdy and very excellent workman. He did with his might whatsoever his hand found to do, and everything he undertook was a success. The beautifully trimmed hedge in front of his cottage-garden proclaimed his method and love of order at a glance. Jarge was a wag; he was the man who, like Shakespeare's clowns, stepped on to the stage at the critical moment and saved a serious situation with a quaint or epigrammatic expression.

He was very scornful of the condition of the farm when I came, and it was he, whose reply to the late tenant that his arable land would soon be all grass, I have already quoted. In speaking to me, at almost our first interview, he could not refrain from an allusion to the foulness of the land; some peewits were circling over those neglected fields, and it was far from reassuring to be told—though he did not intend to discourage me—that "folks say, when you sees them things on the land, the farm's broke!"

From the natural history point of view he was perfectly correct, as peewits generally frequent wild and uncultivated places where the ploughman and the labourer are rarely seen.

Owing to the somewhat unconvincing fact of his wife's brother being a gamekeeper on the Marquis's estate near

Jarge's native village, he had acquired, and retained through all the years of my farming, a sporting reputation; he was always the man selected for trapping any evil beast or bird that might be worrying us; and when the cherries were beginning to show ruddy complexions in the sunshine, and the starlings and blackbirds were becoming troublesome, armed with an old muzzle-loader of mine, he made incessant warfare against them, and his gun could be heard as early as five o'clock in the morning, while the shots would often come pattering down harmlessly on my greenhouse. There came a time when some thieving carrion crows were robbing my half-tame wild duck's nests of their eggs, and Jarge was, of course, detailed to tackle them. Weeks elapsed without any result; the depredations continued, and the men began to chaff him; finally Bell " put the lid on," as people say nowadays, by the following sally: " Ah, Jarge, if ever thee catches a craw 'twill be one as was hatched from an addled egg !"

For weeks before harvest Jarge patrolled my wheat-fields, crowds of sparrows rising and dispersing for a time after every shot, only, I fear, to foregather again very soon on another field, perhaps half a mile distant. No doubt he sent some to my neighbours in return for those which they sent to me.

Jarge was an instance of superior descent; his surname was that of an ancient and prominent county family in former days; he carried himself with dignity and was generally respected; he possessed the power of very minute observation, and was of all others the man to find coins or other small leavings of Roman and former occupiers of my land. His eldest daughter was a charming girl, and, when Jarge became a widower, she made a most efficient mistress of his household. She showed, too, quite unmistakably her descent from distinguished ancestry. Tall, clear-complexioned, graceful, dignified, and rather serious, but with a sweet smile, she was a daughter of whom any man might have been proud. To my thinking, she was the belle of the village, and she made a very pretty picture in her sun-bonnet, among the green and golden tracery of the hop-bine in the hopping season accompanied by the smaller members of the family. At the "crib" into which the hops are picked, many bushels proved their industry, and there were no leaves or rubbish to call for rebuke at the midday and evening measurings.

I selected Jarge for foreman of the hop-picking as a most responsible and trustworthy man; it was then that his sense of humour was most conspicuous, a very important and valuable trait when 300 women and children, and the men who supplied them with hops on the poles, have to be kept cheerful and good-tempered every day and all day for three weeks or a month, sometimes under trying conditions. For though hop-picking is a fascinating occupation when the sun shines and the sky is blue, it is otherwise when the mornings are damp or the hops dripping with dew, and when heavy thunder-rains have left the ground wet and cold.

He had a cheery word for all who were working steadily, and a semi-sarcastic remark for the careless and unmethodical; a keen eye for hops wasted and trodden into the ground, or for poles of undersized hops, unwelcome to the pickers and hidden beneath those from which the hops had been picked. He acted as buffer between capital and labour, smoothing troubles over, telling me of the pickers' difficulties, and explaining my side to the pickers when the quality was poor and prices discouraging, so that the work went with a swing and with happy faces and good-humoured chaff.

I was always pleased to hear the pickers singing, for I knew then that all was well. Sometimes, after a trying day, when Jarge had been called upon to expostulate, or "to talk" more than usual, the corners of his mouth would take a downward turn, and he complained, perhaps, of gipsies or tramps whom I was obliged to employ when the crop was heavy, though they were kept in a gang apart from the villagers; but he always came up happy again next morning, the mouth corners tending upwards, and his broad and beaming smile with a radiance like the rising sun on a midsummer morning.

Jarge was a man of discrimination. When we were forced to inaugurate a School Board on account of the growing difficulty, owing to the bad times, of collecting voluntary subscriptions, all the old school managers, including my second Vicar—I served under three Vicars as churchwarden—refused to join the Board. Jarge, who was much exercised in his mind as to the possibility of future bad management, came to me, and referring to a proposal to place working-men on the Board, said: "We wants men like you, sir, for members; what's the good of sending we dunderyeads there?"

Going round the farm on his daughter's wedding-day, I was surprised to find him at work; and when I asked him why he was not at the ceremony, "Well," he replied, "I don't think much of weddings—the fittel (victuals) ain't good enough; give me a jolly good fŭ-ner-rāl!"

Jarge wore a brown velveteen coat on high-days and holidays by virtue of his sporting reputation, and looked exceedingly smart with special corduroy breeches and gaiters and a wide-awake felt hat. He was much annoyed in Birmingham, whither I had sent all the men to an agricultural show, at hearing a man say to a companion, "There's another of them Country Johnnies." When I told him what a swell he looked, he replied somewhat ruefully, "No! that's what I never could be," as though he felt that his appearance was disappointingly rustic.

Though a most industrious man, he had dreams of the enjoyment of complete leisure; he told me that if ever he possessed as much as fifty pounds he would never do another day's work as long as he lived. I answered that when that ideal was reached he would postpone his projected ease until he had made it a hundred, and so on *ad infinitum;* and this proved a correct forecast, for in time, by the aid of a well-managed allotment and regular wages, he saved a good bit of money. When I sold my fruit crops by auction, on the trees, for the buyers to pick, just before I gave up my land, as I should not be present to harvest the late apples and cider fruit after Michaelmas, he came forward with a bid of one hundred pounds for one of the orchards, though it was sold eventually for a higher price.

He was not well versed in finance, however, for when the owner of his cottage offered, at his request, to build a new pigsty if he would pay a rent of 5 per cent. annually on the cost—a very fair proposal—Jarge declined with scorn, being, I think, under the impression that the owner was demanding the complete sum of five pounds annually, and I found it impossible to disabuse his mind of the idea. He felt aggrieved also by the fact that, having paid rent for twenty-five or thirty years, he was no nearer ownership of his cottage than when he began. His argument was that, as he had paid more than the value of the cottage, it should be his property; the details of interest on capital and all rates and repairs paid by the owner did not appeal to him.

On the occasion of a concert at Malvern, which my wife and her sister organized for the benefit of our church restoration fund, I gave all my men a holiday, and sent them off by train at an early hour; they were to climb the Worcestershire Beacon—the highest point of the Malvern range—in the morning, and attend the concert in the afternoon. It was a lovely day, and the programme was duly carried out. Next morning I found Jarge and another man, who had been detailed for the day's work to sow nitrate of soda on a distant wheat-field, sitting peacefully under the hedge; they told me that the excitement and the climb had completely tired them out, but that they would stop and complete the job, no matter how late at night that might be. It was the hill-climbing, I think, that had brought into play muscles not generally used in our flat country. I sympathized, and left them resting, but the work was honourably concluded before they left the field.

When there was illness in Jarge's house and somebody told him that the doctor had been seen leaving, he answered that he " Would sooner see the butcher there any day "—not, perhaps, a very happy expression in the circumstances, but intended to convey that a butcher's bill, for good meat supplied, was more satisfactory than a doctor's account, which represented nothing in the way of commissariat.

Among the annual trips to which I treated my men, I sent them for a long summer day to London, and one of my pupils kindly volunteered to act as conductor to the sights. They had a very successful day, and the principal streets and shows were visited; among the latter the Great Wheel, then very popular, was the one that seemed to interest them most.

Next morning some of the travellers were hoeing beans in one of my fields; I interviewed them on my round, and inquired what they thought of London. They had much enjoyed the day, and were greatly struck by the fact that the barmaid, at the place where they had eaten the lunch they took with them, had recognized them as " Oostershire men "; they had demanded their beer in three or four quart jugs, which could be handed round so that each man could take a pull in turn, instead of the usual fashion of separate glasses, and it appeared that this indicated the locality from whence they came. Probably she had noticed their accent, and, being a native of Worcestershire, remembered their intimate drinking custom as a county peculiarity. The men proceeded to describe the sights of London, and one of them added that there was one thing they could not find there, stopping suddenly in some confusion. I pressed him to explain. He still hesitated, and, turning to the others, said: " *You* tell the master, Bill." Bill was not so diffident. " Well," he said, " we couldn't see a good-looking 'ooman in Lunnon; for Jarge here, 'e was judge over 'em for a bit, and then Tom 'e took it, nor 'e couldn't see one neither !"

Jarge was somewhat of a *bon vivant*, and much appreciated my annual present of a piece of Christmas beef. When thanking me and descanting upon its tenderness and acceptability, on one occasion, he continued, " It ain't like the sort of biff we folks has to put up with, that tough you has to set in the middle of the room at dinner, for fear you might daish your brains out agen the wall a-tuggin' at it with your teeth !"

Jarge had one song and only one that I ever heard, and he was always called upon for it at harvest suppers and other jollifications; it was not a classic, but he rendered it with characteristic drollery, and always brought down the house. I conclude my sketch of him by mentioning it because it is almost my last impression of his vivid personality, trotted out with great energy at my farewell supper, a day or two before I left Aldington.

Among the men who were bequeathed to me, so to speak, by my predecessor, Tom was one of whom I always had a high opinion. Tall, vigorous, and well made, one recognized at once his possibilities as a valuable man. He was somewhat cautious, taciturn, very sensitive and reserved, but would open out in conversation when alone with me. As quite a young man he had worked at the building of the branch line from Oxford to Wolverhampton, via Worcester, the " O. W. and W.," or " Old Wusser and Wusser," as it was called, until taken over by the Great Western Railway. The latter, extending from London to Oxford, was, I believe, one of Brunell's masterly conceptions, being without a tunnel the whole way. But the new line had to pierce the Cotswolds before reaching the Vale of Evesham, and Tom had many yarns about the construction of the long Mickleton tunnel. Among them was a tradition of the cost, so great that guineas laid edgeways throughout its length would not pay for it.

In my time there was a splendid service of express trains running from London to Worcester without a stop, and coming downhill into the Vale, through the tunnel and towards Evesham, the speed approximated to a mile a minute. I was talking to one of my men, a hedger, working near the line which bounded a portion of my land, when one of the express trains came dashing along and passed us with a roar in a few seconds. "My word," said he, "I reckon that's a cō-rider." I was puzzled, but presently it came to me that he meant "corridor"; he had probably seen the word in the local paper without having heard it pronounced.

It was a treat to watch Tom's magnificent physique when felling a big tree, stripped to his shirt, with sleeves rolled up, and his gleaming axe slowly raised and poised for a second above him before it fell with the gathered impetus of its own weight and his powerful stress. Biting time after time into the exact place aimed at, and at the most effective angle possible, the clean chips would fly in all directions until the necessary notch was cut and the basal outgrowths, close to the ground around the sturdy column, were reduced, so that the cross-cut saw could complete its downfall with a mighty crash. There is always something sad about the felling of an ancient tree; one feels it is a venerable creature that has passed long years of unchallenged dominion on the spot occupied, and one can scarcely avoid an idea of its intelligence and its silent record of passing generations, who have welcomed its shade at blazing summer noontides, or crept close to its warm touch for shelter from the winter's chilling blast and the hissing hail.

Tom was always the leader of my team of mowers when the grass was cut, for, with the large staff I employed on purpose for the all-important hop-gardens, I never wanted, till towards the end of my time, to make use of a machine. The steady swing of his scythe, with scarcely an apparent effort, the swish, as the swathe fell beneath its keen edge, and the final lift of the severed grasses at the end of the stroke, all in regular rhythmic action, were very fascinating to watch. At intervals came a halt for "whetting" the blade, and the musical sound of rubber (sharpening stone) against steel, equally adroitly accomplished, proved the artist at his work, with a delicacy of touch which, perhaps in different circumstances, might have produced the thrills with which Pachmann's velvet caress or Paderewski's refined expression enchant a vast and rapturous audience.

As a land-drainer, too, I loved to watch him standing in the slippery trench, with not an inch more soil moved than was necessary, lifting out the decreasing "draws," and leaving a bottom nicely rounded exactly to fit the pipes, and finally the methodical adjustment of each pipe, with the concluding tap to bring it close to the last one laid. Draining is an art which taxes the ability of the best of men, for it must be remembered that, like the links of a chain, its efficiency is no greater than that of its weakest part.

When I had to arrange for the harvesting of my first hop crop, it was necessary to find a man who could be entrusted with the critical work of drying the hops, and Tom was the man I chose. I had my kiln ready, constructed in an old malthouse, on the latest principles, and in time for the first crop. The kiln consisted of a space about 20 feet square, walled off at one end of the old building, but with entrances on the ground and first floors. Beneath, in the lower compartment, was the fireplace, a yard square, and 16 feet above was the floor on which the hops were dried. Anthracite coal was used for fuel, the fire being maintained day and night throughout the picking—the morning's picking drying between 1 p.m. and 12 midnight, and the afternoon's picking between 1 a.m. and 12 o'clock noon. Tom was therefore on duty for the whole twenty-four hours, with what snatches of sleep he could catch in the initial stage of each drying and at odd moments.

The process requires great skill and attention; at first he and I, with what little knowledge I had, puzzled it out together, he having had no previous experience, and night after night I sat up with him till the load came off the kiln at midnight. A slight excess of heat, or an irregular application of it, will spoil the hops, the principle being to raise the temperature, very gradually at first, to 30 or 40 degrees higher at the finish. Hops should be *blown* dry by a blast of hot air, not baked by heat alone. The drier, of course, has to keep a watchful eye on the thermometer on the upper floor among the hops—Tom always called it the " theometer "—regulating his fire accordingly and the admission of cold air through adjustable ventilators on the outside walls. This regulation varies according to the weather, the moisture of the air, and the condition of the hops, and calls for critical judgment and accuracy. Often, tired out with the previous ordinary day's work, we had much ado to keep awake at night, and it was fatal to arrange a too comfortable position with the warmth of the glowing fire and the soporific scent of the hops. Then Tom would announce that it was " time to get them little props out," which, in imagination, were to support our wearied eyelids.

When we decided that the hops were ready to be cooled down, to prevent breaking when being taken off the drying floor, all doors, windows, and ventilators were thrown open and the fire banked up, and, while they were cooling, he went to neighbouring cottages to rouse the men who came nightly to unload and reload the kiln, and then I could retire to bed.

Tom was devoted to duty, and was so successful as a hop-drier that he soon became capable of managing two more kilns in the same building, which I enlarged as I gradually increased my acreage. In a good season he would often have £100 worth of hops through his hands in the twenty-four hours, sometimes more. He was the only man I ever employed at this particular work, and throughout those years he turned out hops to the value of nearly £30,000 without a single mishap or spoiled kiln-load—a better proof of his devotion to duty than anything else I could say.

He was a very picturesque figure when, " crowned with the sickle and the wheaten sheaf, Autumn comes jovial on," and he was cutting wheat, his head covered with a coloured handkerchief, knotted at the corners, to protect the back of his neck from the sun, which must have been much cooler than the felt hat—a kind of " billycock " with a flat top—which he habitually wore. I have noticed that the labourer's style of hat is a matter of great conservatism, probably due to the fancy that he would " look odd " in any other, and would be liable to chaff from his fellow-workers.

Tom had a tremendous reach, and got through a big day's work in the harvest-field, but nearly always knocked himself up after two or three days in the broiling sun, developing what he called, " Tantiddy's fire " in one fore-arm; this is the local equivalent of St. Anthony's fire, an ailment termed professionally erysipelas, but I have never heard how it is connected with the saint.

Harvesters often work in pairs, and they are then " butties " (partners), but not infrequently a harvester will be accompanied by his wife or daughter to tie up the sheaves; and their active figures among the golden corn, backed by a horizon of blue sky, make a charming picture. The mind goes back to the old Scripture references to the time of harvest, and the idea impresses itself that one is looking at almost exactly the same scene as it appeared to the old writers, and which they described in all the dignity of their stately language.

Tom was not much given to the epigrammatic expression of his thoughts, like some of the other men, but he had a vein of humour. A relative of his used to come over from Evesham to sing in our church choir, and I remember a special occasion when the choir was somewhat *piano* until this singer's part came in; he had a strong and not very melodious voice, and the effort and the effect alike were startling. Tom was in church at the time, and had evidently been watching expectantly for the *fortissimo* climax; he told me afterwards that " when S. opened his mouth I knew it was sure to come." It did !

I have mentioned Tom's cautiousness; he had a way of assenting to a statement without committing himself to definite agreement. I once asked him who the leaders had been in a disorderly incident, being aware that he knew; I suggested the names, but the nearest approach to assent which I could extract was, "If you spakes again you'll be wrong."

CHAPTER IV

THE HEAD CARTER—THE CARPENTER

"There's a right way and a wrong way to do everything, and folks most in general chooses the wrong un."—Tom G.

Jim was my first head carter, and he dearly loved a horse. He had, as the saying is, forgotten more about horses than most men ever knew, and what he didn't know wasn't worth knowing.

He was a cheery man, and when I went to Aldington was about to be married. Not being much of a "scholard," his first request was that I would write out his name and that of his intended, for the publication of the banns. A group of men was standing round at the time, and I asked him how his somewhat unusual name was spelt. Seeing that he was puzzled, I hazarded a guess myself, repeating the six letters in order slowly. He was greatly surprised and pleased to recognize that my attempt was correct, and, turning to the bystanders, remarked with the utmost sincerity, "There ain't many as could have done that, mind you!" I felt that my reputation for scholarship was established.

Jim was a fisherman, and was no representative of "a worm at one end and a fool at the other." I gave him leave to fish in my brooks; he was wily, patient, and successful, and one day brought me a nice salmon-trout, by no means common in these streams. In thanking him, I made him a standing offer of a shilling a pound for any more he could catch, but he never got another. Writing of fishing, I cannot forbear quoting Thomson's lines on the subject, under "Spring," the most vivid description of the sport I have ever read:

"When with his lively ray the potent sun
Has pierced the streams, and roused the finny race,
Then, issuing cheerful, to thy sport repair;
Chief should the western breezes curling play,
And light o'er ether bear the shadowy clouds.
High to their fount, this day, amid the hills,
And woodlands warbling round, trace up the brooks;
The next, pursue their rocky-channel'd maze,
Down to the river, in whose ample wave
Their little naiads love to sport at large.
Just in the dubious point, where with the pool
Is mix'd the trembling stream, or where it boils
Around the stone, or from the hollow'd bank
Reverted plays in undulating flow,
There throw, nice-judging, the delusive fly;
And as you lead it round in artful curve,
With eye attentive mark the springing game,
Straight as above the surface of the flood
They wanton rise, or urged by hunger leap,
Then fix, with gentle twitch, the barbed hook:
Some lightly tossing to the grassy bank,
And to the shelving shore slow-dragging some,
With various hand proportion'd to their force.
If yet too young, and easily deceived,
A worthless prey scarce bends your pliant rod,
Him, piteous of his youth and the short space
He has enjoy'd the vital light of heaven,
Soft disengage, and back into the stream
The speckled captive throw. But should you lure
From his dark haunt, beneath the tangled roots
Of pendant trees, the monarch of the brook,
Behoves you then to ply your finest art.
Long time he following cautious, scans the fly;
And oft attempts to seize it, but as oft
The dimpled water speaks his jealous fear.
At last, while haply yet the shaded sun
Passes a cloud, he desperate takes the death,
With sullen plunge. At once he darts along,
Deep-struck, and runs out all the lengthen'd line;
Then seeks the furthest ooze, the sheltering weed,
The cavern'd bank, his old secure abode;
And flies aloft, and flounces round the pool,
Indignant of the guile. With yielding hand,
That feels him still, yet to his furious course
Gives way, you, now retiring, following now
Across the stream, exhaust his idle rage:
Till floating broad upon his breathless side,
And to his fate abandon'd, to the shore
You gaily drag your unresisting prize."

Horses were scarce and dear when I went to Aldington, and many French animals were being imported. I got an old acquaintance in the South of England to send me four or five; they were all greys, useful workers, but wanting the spirit and stamina of the English horse; and they would always wait for the Englishman to start a heavy standing load before throwing their weight into the collar. Jim told me that they were "desperate ongain" (very awkward), and, as foreigners, well they might be, for I myself had some difficulty in understanding the local words of command, more especially in ploughing, when, with a team of four, he shouted his orders, addressing the new horses by names with which they were quite unfamiliar.

I admired Jim's loyalty to his late master, if not his veracity, at the valuation of the stock, which I took over as it stood. Being aware that there was a lame one or two among the horses, I warned my valuer beforehand. We entered the stable, and my valuer, thinking to catch Jim off his guard, asked casually which they were. Jim was quite ready for him, and answered without a moment's hesitation, "Nerrun, sir" (never a one). They were, however, easily detected when trotted out on the road.

Jim was a capital hand at "getting up" a horse for sale; an extra sack or two of corn, constant grooming, and rest in the stable, with the aid of some mysterious powders, which, I think, contained arsenic, soon brought out the "dapples," which he called "crown-pieces," on their coats, and in a couple of months' time one scarcely recognized the somewhat angular beast upon which his labours had wrought a miracle, and put a ten-pound note at least on the value. We had an ancient and otherwise doubtful mare, "Bonny," ready for Pershore Fair, and the previous day Jim wanted to know if I intended to be present. I told him, "No! I should have to tell too many lies." "Oh!" said he, "I'll do all that, sir!" He sold the mare to a big dealer for all she was worth, I think, though not a large figure. Soon afterwards I had to expostulate with him about some fault. He explained the circumstances from his point of view, adding, "And that's the truth, sir, and the truth *is* the truth, and"—triumphantly—"that's what'll carry a man through the world!" I could say no more, but could not help remembering his willingness to testify to Bonny's doubtful merits at Pershore Fair.

Jim became a widower, but eventually married again; a good woman, who made a capital wife. Shortly before the wedding, when he came to see me on some business, my wife happened to be present; she was very anxious to find out the date in order that we might attend. Jim was shy, not wishing it to be generally known, and nothing could be got out of him. On leaving, however, he repented and, looking back over his shoulder, made the announcement, "Our job comes off next Thursday," then closing the door quickly, he was gone.

He got my permission to visit his mother and son, both ailing in Birmingham, and on his return I made inquiries. The boy was better, but about his mother he said, "I don't take so much notice of she, for her be regular weared out"—not unkindly or undutifully intended, but just a plain statement of fact, simply put; for she was a very old woman, and could not in the course of nature be expected to live much longer.

That Jim had a tender heart I know, for when we lost a very favourite horse, one which "you could not put at the wrong job," I found him weeping and much distressed. Later he said, "When you lose a horse I reckon it's a double loss, for you haven't got the horse or the money." My mind being dominated by the unanswerable accuracy of the latter part of the statement, I did not, for a moment, see that the first part was fallacious, because, of course, one could not have both at one and the same time.

He was an excellent ploughman, and considerable skill is demanded to manage the long wood plough, locally made, and still the best implement of the sort on the adhesive land of the Vale of Evesham. It has no wheels, like the ordinary iron plough has, to regulate the depth and width of the furrow-slice, because in wet weather, if tried on this almost stoneless land, the wheels become so clogged with mud and refuse, such as stubble from the previous crop, that they will not revolve, sliding helplessly involved along the ground. Even the mould-board is wood, generally pear-tree, to which the mud does not adhere, as happens with iron. As an old neighbour explained to me, "You can cut the newest bread with a wooden knife, whereas the doughy crumb of the bread would stick to a steel one." Pear-tree wood is used because it wears "slick" (smooth), and does not splinter like wood which is longer in the grain.

With these long wood ploughs the ploughman himself regulates the depth and width of the furrow-slice—*i.e.*, each strip that is severed and turned over—by holding the handles firmly in the correct position as the plough travels along, for it cannot be left for a moment to its own inclination. This entails strict attention and much muscular effort, and, of course, the latter comes into play also in turning at each end of the field. The result is very effective; the flat mould-board offers the least possible resistance to the inversion of the soil, whereas the iron plough, with a curling mould-board, presses the crest of the furrow-slice into regularity of form, and gives a more finished appearance at the expense of much extra friction and labour for the horses.

A carter-boy accompanies each team, as driver, to keep the horses up to their work and turn them at the ends. A farmer I knew in Hampshire would not, if possible, employ a boy unless he could whistle—of course the ability and degree of excellence is a guide to character, and indicates to some extent a harmonious disposition; he always said, "Now whistle," when engaging a new boy.

There are few more pleasant agricultural operations to watch and to follow than a lusty team, a skilful ploughman, and a whistling boy at work, on a glowing autumn day, when the stubble is covered with gossamers gleaming with iridescent colours in the sunshine. The upturned earth is fragrant, the fresh soil looks rich and full of promise, there is the feeling that old mistakes and disappointments are being buried out of sight, and the hope and anticipation of the future.

On a Lincolnshire farm where I was a pupil, an incident occurred illustrating the anxiety of a carter for the welfare of his horses, in combination with no small cunning. The owner, in the stable one Sunday morning, noticed an open Bible in the manger; having doubts as to the reliability of the carter, he regarded the Bible, so prominently displayed, with some suspicion. Looking carefully all round he could see nothing to find fault with, until he glanced upward at the floor over the manger, where he discovered a protruding cork. He remembered that a heap of oats was stored in the loft, from which the bailiff gave out the rations for their teams to each man weekly. Getting the key of the loft, he found that the cork was nicely adjusted to a hole beneath the oats, so that the carter in question could exceed the recognized ration whenever inclined. The fault was, of course, more one of disobedience than of robbery, as the corn was consumed by his master's horses, and the prominence of the Bible was perhaps the worst feature, evidently a deceptive device to arrest suspicion, though it proved to have exactly the opposite effect.

Very few of my men suffered from rheumatism, but Jim was an exception. I think he applied horse embrocation to himself; he would extol its efficacy, and would tell how, when the pain attacked his shoulder, the remedy " druv it " to his back; applied to the latter, " it druv it " to his legs; and so on indefinitely.

I kept about a dozen working horses besides colts; the latter are broken at two years old, but only very lightly worked, and, when quiet and handy, they are turned out again till a year older. Our method of maintaining the full capacity of horse-power on the farm was to breed, or buy at six months old, two colts, and sell off two of the oldest horses every year. As two colts could be bought for forty or fifty pounds at that age, and the two old horses sold for a hundred and twenty pounds or thereabouts, a good balance was left on the transaction, while the full strength of the teams was maintained.

Jim had sufficient foresight to view with alarm the gradual dispersion of most of the oldest and best farmers in the neighbourhood, and the conversion to grass of the arable land, owing to the unfair and dangerous competition of American wheat. When we discussed the subject and foretold the straits to which the country would be reduced in the event of war with a great European Power, he concluded these forebodings with the habitual remark, "Well, what I says is, them as lives longest will see the most." A truism, no doubt, but, as time has proved, by no means an incorrect view.

There was always plenty of employment for an estate carpenter on my farms, as I had a vast number of buildings, including four separate sets of barn, stable, sheds, and yard, away from the village, as well as those near the Manor House, and many repairs were necessary. There were, too, very many gates, repairs to fences, hurdle-making, and odd jobs, to keep a man employed for months at a time. The building of three hop-kilns, with the necessary storerooms for green and dried hops, as the hop acreage increased, the preparation of hop-poles, and the erection of wire-work on larger poles, which gradually superseded the ordinary pole system, all demanded a great deal of regular work.

I was most fortunate in obtaining the services of a man living in a neighbouring village, not only as estate carpenter, but as a skilled joiner, and possessing all the knowledge and efficiency of an experienced builder. When I first met him, or very soon afterwards, Tom G. was a teetotaller, and I have always had immense admiration for the strength of will which enabled him to conquer completely the drink habit, for he freely admitted that he was entirely mastered by it in his younger days. He told me, and it proves what a kindly word will sometimes do, that the Squire of his village, who also employed him largely, said to him, after praising some of his work, "There's only one thing the matter with you, Tom, and that's the drink." "I went home," said Tom, "and I thought to myself, if the drink is all that's wrong with me, what a fool I must be to continue it. Next day I went to Evesham and signed the pledge, and I've never touched a drop since, though the smell and the sight of a public-house have been so sore a temptation that many a time after a long day's work, and with money in my pocket, I've gone a mile or two out of my way in order not to pass a place of the sort."

His training as a carpenter had induced habits of great accuracy, exact method, and lucid thought, and a chat with him, and watching his quick and clever workmanship, was an educational opportunity. I have always been fascinated by such work, and one of my earliest recollections is of being taken by my father to interview a carpenter about some small household job. His name was Snewin—I am not sure of the spelling, for I was only about eight years old at the time—and we found him in his workshop vigorously using a long plane on some red deal boards, his feet buried in beautifully curled shavings, and the whole place redolent of the delicious scent of turpentine. Every time his plane travelled along the edge, to my childish fancy, the board said in plaintive tones of remonstrance, *in crescendo,* his name, "Snewin, *Snewin,*" and again, SNEWIN," and even now the scent and action of planing a deal board always brings back the scene clearly to my mind.

I suppose, therefore, it was partly old associations that induced the fascination of watching Tom G. at his work, but there were other reasons. With his axe, the edge beautifully ground and sharpened to a razor-like finish, he could trim a piece of wood, or shape it, so neatly that it presented almost the appearance of having been planed; his saw, with no apparent effort, raced from end to end of a board or across the grain of a piece of "quartering," and his chisels and plane irons were ground to the correct concave bevel that relieves the parting of a chip or shaving, and gives what he called "sweetness" to the cutting action. He was a strong Conservative, good at an argument, and had many heated discussions with some of my men whose tendencies leaned to the opposite side; but his sound logic and common sense were observable in all his ideas, and I think he generally came off best as a shrewd and clear-headed debater, for from his employment in various places his horizon was wider than that of the ordinary farm labourers.

Tom G. had considerable knowledge of the Bible, which he sometimes employed in conversation; alluding to the work that was nearly always waiting for him at Aldington, he told a friend of mine that there was "carn (corn) in Egypt"; and when he had a written contract with me for a special piece of work, and wished to suggest that as time went on we might think of some improvement, and that there was no necessity to adhere to the original specifications, he announced that "we bean't Mades, nor we bean't Piersians" (we're not Medes, nor are we Persians).

No necessary measurement was ever guessed at, his "rule" was always handy in a special pocket, but in cases where a rough guess was sufficient he would hazard it by what he called "scowl of brow" (intently regarding it). The agricultural labourer is inclined, both with weights and measures, to be inaccurate, "reckoning it's near enough." I found soon after I came to Aldington that the weighing machine which had been in use throughout the whole of my predecessor's time, and had weighed up hundreds of pounds of wool at 2s. and 2s. 6d. a pound, cheese at 8d., and thousands of sacks of wheat, barley, and beans, was about a pound in each hundredweight *against the seller*, so that he must have lost a considerable sum in giving overweight.

Tom G. was scornful about weather signs, and summed up his doubts in such matters with sarcasm: "I reckon that the indications for rain are very similar to the indications for fine weather!" But the best epigram I ever heard from him was, "There's a right way and a wrong way to do everything, and folks most in general chooses the wrong un!" I should like to see those words of wisdom on the title-page of every school book, and blazoned up in letters of gold on the wall of every classroom in every school in the kingdom.

I have referred to the hop-kilns I built. Throughout the work of erecting them, and it was no small one, Tom G. was the leading spirit; it gave scope for his abilities, I think, on a larger scale than any building he had previously undertaken. We began with a kiln sufficient for the first 6 acres planted; it was necessary, with the gradual extinction of British corn-growing, to find something to supersede it, and to compensate for the falling off in farm receipts. I had seen something of hops as a pupil on a large farm near Alton, Hampshire, where they occupied an area of over a hundred acres, but at that time I had no intention of growing them myself, and had not been infected with the glamour, formerly attaching to hops beyond any other crop, that came to me later.

I visited the old Alton farm, and obtained all particulars of the latest kind of hop-kiln in the neighbourhood from the inventor, and instructed him to prepare plans and specifications for the conversion of an old malthouse close to the Manor. I contracted with Tom G. for all the carpenter's work, and with an excellent stonemason or bricklayer for that belonging to his department. They both entered with enthusiasm upon the job, and we had many interesting discussions as to improvement, as it proceeded. Tom G. was a man of great resource, and could always find a way out of every difficulty; he told me, before we began, that he could see the completed building as if actually finished, just as a great sculptor once said how easy it was to produce a statue from a block of marble, for all he had to do was to cut away the superfluous material!

The alterations entailed a new roof from end to end of the old building, and a new floor for the upper part, the length being about 70 and the width about 20 feet. The old roof was covered mostly with stone-slates—flakes of limestone from the Cotswolds—very uneven in size and rough as to surface, and in part with ordinary blue slates. The latter lie much more closely on the laths, the stone slates allowing the passage of more air between them, and it was interesting to find that while the ancient laths under the stone slates were fairly well preserved, those beneath the blue slates were much decayed, evidently from the fact of the damp in an unheated building remaining longer where the air was excluded, though one would have expected the close-lying blue slates to be the better protection of the two.

Much expense was saved by Tom G.'s economical use of materials; wherever the old oak beams could be used again they were incorporated with the new work. He never cut sound old or new pieces of timber to waste; almost every scrap came in somewhere, for he worked with his head as well as his hands.

The difference in this respect is very noticeable in different men; an old plumber once told me that he had been employed upon a pump on a neighbouring farm, where the slot in which the handle works was so worn on one side that the bolt which carries the handle had given way, owing to the man, who had used it for years, not keeping it running truly in the centre. He called the man's attention to the cause of the damage, and, being a sententious old fellow, asked him why he didn't think what he was doing. The answer was, "I'm not paid to think."

The hop-kiln was a great success, and later, with the same workmen, I added two more, as my hopyards extended, on exactly the same lines. They would probably have been annually in use in the picking season up to the present time had it not been that the low prices ruling latterly have rendered a crop which requires so much labour, knowledge, and supervision, not worth growing.

I hear, however, with much satisfaction, that these old hop-kilns and storerooms have been of great service during the war for drying medicinal herbs, chiefly belladonna and henbane, and that in 1917 the turnover exceeded £6,000.

CHAPTER V

AN OLD FASHIONED SHEPHERD—OLD TRICKER—A GARDENER—MY SECOND HEAD CARTER—A LABOURER

> "Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
> They kept the noiseless tenor of their way."
>
> GRAY'S *Elegy.*

I HAD experiences of various shepherds, and the man I remember best was John C. Short, sturdy, strong, and willing, he was somewhat prejudiced and old-fashioned, with many traditions and inherited convictions as to remedies and the treatment of sheep. John had a knowing expression; his nose projected and his forehead and chin retreated, so that his profile was angular. He wore the old-fashioned long smock-frock—not the modern short linen jacket which goes by the name of smock, but a garment that reached to his knees, with a beautifully worked front over the chest. It is a pity that these old smock-frocks are no longer in vogue: I never see one now; they were most picturesque, and afforded great protection from the rough weather which a shepherd has constantly to face. His hat was of soft felt, placed well towards the back of his head, and, behind it, he wore a wealth of curls overlapping the collar of his smock. John was very proud of his curls; he told a group of men, who were sheep-dipping with him, that the parasites of the sheep, which are formidable in appearance, never troubled him until they reached his head. "Into them curls, I suppose, John ?" said a flippant bystander. John was pleased that his most attractive feature should receive even this recognition.

Altogether he presented a notable figure, and one quite typical of his profession, especially when armed with his staff of office, his crook. He was inclined to superstitious beliefs, and told me when I noticed the matted condition of the manes of some colts domiciled in a distant set of buildings that he reckoned "Old P. G."—an ancient dame in a neighbouring cottage with a reputation for witchcraft—"had been a-ridin' of 'em on moonlight nights." This matted appearance of colts' manes, which is only the natural result of their not being groomed or combed when young and unbroken, was known in many country places as "hag-ridden." Such superstitions are now nearly, if not quite, extinct, but still linger in old place-names, for it was usual in former times to attribute any uncommon or surprising physical appearance to supernatural agency. Thus we have such names as "Devil's Dyke," "Devil's Punchbowl," "Puck Pits," "Pokesdown" (Puck's Down), and many others.

The fairy rings, too, which puzzled our ancestors, are explicable by a natural process. The starting-point is a fungus, *Marasmius oreades,* which in due course sheds its spores in a tiny circle around it; the decay of the fungus supplies nitrogen to the grass, and renders it dark green in colour. The circle expands, always outwards, more and more fungi appearing every year; it does not return inwards because the mineral constituents of the soil are exhausted by the growth of the fungus and of the grass, under the stimulus of the abundant nitrogen left by the former, so that the dark ring of grass extends its diameter year by year.

In the *Tempest* Shakespeare refers to the fairies:

> ". . . That
> By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
> Whereof the ewe not bites."

John carried a magic bottle of caustic liniment for application to the feet of sheep affected with the complaint called "foot-rot." The cause of this troublesome disease is excessive development of the walls of the hoof, owing to the animals grazing exclusively on wet pasture, the surface of which is too soft to keep them worn down; the walls gradually double over and collect wet mud, which causes inflammation. It never occurred on my arable land, either among ewes or younger sheep, but whenever I bought sheep from the flint stones of Hampshire and grazed them on soft pasture, it soon made its appearance. The remedy is timely and constant paring of the hoof before any tendency to lameness is observed, and when this is properly attended to no caustic application is necessary. Lame sheep indicate an inefficient shepherd, and the disorder has been well called "Shepherd's Neglect."

An eminent breeder of prize Hampshire Down sheep told me that, when contemplating the exhibition of sheep, the first necessity is to get a "prize shepherd," a man with a presence, and a reputation which he would not risk in the show-ring without something worth exhibiting. I started a flock of pedigree Shropshires, but my land was too good and grew them too big and coarse for showing, and I soon found that it was useless to try, though I succeeded in taking a prize at the Warwickshire county show. It so happened that when my shepherd (not John) returned in great triumph from the show, he found his first-born son, who had arrived in his absence, awaiting him. "Well done, shupperd," said a neighbour, "got him a son and a prize the same day!"

John was jealous of any interference in his remedial measures for ailing sheep, but my wife, who doctored the village generally, was anxious to try her hand, having little faith in his skill; so we arranged that the next time he had what he considered a hopeless case it was to be given over to her exclusively. The opportunity soon occurred; a ewe was found caught by the fleece in some rough briars in an old hedge, where it had been some hours in great distress, and, with much struggling to free itself, it was quite exhausted. Pneumonia supervened, and when John thought it impossible to save its life he handed the case over to my wife. She succeeded, chiefly, I think, by careful nursing, in pulling it through, much to John's surprise; doubtless he thought its recovery a lucky fluke. John was given to occasional alcoholic lapses; on one occasion I found him aimlessly driving sheep across a field of growing mangolds! I could see that he was muddled, and on reaching home later I sought an interview. He was not to be found, but at his cottage his wife told me that John was not very well. I postponed my reckoning till the following day, when, with great readiness, he explained how it happened. "The day before," he said, "I frained my fittle (refrained from my victuals) all day, and when I got up yesterday I didn't feel justly righteous (quite right) ov my inside; so I gets a bit of 'bacca, just about as much as *you* med put in your pipe (this, apparently, to incriminate me), and I putts it at the bottom of a tay-cup, with a drop ov rum; then I fills it up with hot tay and drinks it off, and very soon I felt it a coming over (overcoming) mer (me)."

Sheep-breeding was not one of the most important branches of farming in my part of Worcestershire: the land is too stiff and wet, they thrive much better on the Cotswolds or the chalk downs of Hampshire. At one time I visited the latter county every summer, attending the big fairs like Overton or Alresford, for the purpose of buying 100 draft ("full-mouthed") ewes from one of the best flocks. It was very interesting in the early morning, reaching Overton by rail from Basingstoke, where I had passed the night at the Red Lion with £300 in bank-notes under my pillow, to see the gipsies in the village asleep on the ground under their vans, the girls sometimes awake, combing their hair, and beautifying themselves in readiness for the pleasure fair where they were to appear in charge of the shooting-galleries and competitions. A short walk, with only time for a passing glance at the speckled trout near the bridge over the Itchen, which I never omitted, took me to the sheep-pens on the hill-top where the fair is held. One could see the flocks, with their shepherds always *in front* and the dogs behind, winding along the narrow lanes, which, from all directions, lead to the hill, in a cloud of chalky dust, flock after flock with only a few dividing yards between them. It is advisable to reach the fair-ground thus early, to see the sheep before they are penned;

they can be much better inspected in the open than when packed close together, and a more reliable opinion of their condition can be formed. From the æsthetic point of view the grand old shepherds interested me most, dignified, patriarchal men, with a reserve of strength of character evident in their rugged features, and the patience and hardihood that takes little heed of exposure to every variety of weather.

The sheep were sold by auction, and when I had bought a pen of 100, generally from Lord Ashburton's flock, paid the auctioneer's clerk as soon as possible and received a ticket permitting the release of the sheep, as the roads in all directions are soon crowded, I induced the shepherd to help in driving them to the railway-station. He was always a dear old fellow, and full of interesting information. On reaching the station we packed the sheep into three open trucks, so close that they could not jump out, and despatched them to Worcestershire, whither they would arrive about noon the following day. We never had a mishap with them on the journey, but they were terribly thirsty on reaching Aldington, and made straight for water immediately.

Old Tricker came to Worcestershire originally with a farmer who migrated from Suffolk, which proves him to have been a valuable man. But he was worn out even when he first came to work for me, though as willing and industrious as ever. My bailiff often praised him—for his work was excellent, if somewhat slow on account of his age—and used to tell him that " All as be the matter with you, Tricker, is that you was born too soon," which was only too true, for he must have been the oldest man on the farm by at least twenty years. He was a steady worker, and was often so absorbed in his job, such as hoeing, that, being, moreover, somewhat deaf, he was not aware of my approach until I was quite close. On such occasions, with a violent start, he always said: " My word, how you did frighten I, to be sure! Shows I don't look about me much, however, don't it ?"

He was fond of fairs, wakes, and " mops "—no doubt they were reminiscent of old days, for he lived in the past —and he would often beg a day off for such outings; he was a subject for the chaff of the other men for his gaiety when these jaunts took place. They pretended that, as a widower for many years, it was time for him to think of another courtship. On a festive occasion, when we were giving a dinner to all the men and their wives, great amusement was caused by crackers, which the guests, I think, had never seen before, containing paper caps and imitation jewellery; and it was a merry scene when all around the tables were decorated in the most incongruous fashion. Old Tricker happened to become possessed of a plain gilt wedding-ring, and of course chaff was levelled at him from all sides: "Ah, Tricker; sly dog, sly dog!" and so on. He was greatly pleased, accepting good-naturedly the part of pantaloon of the piece; and I am sure, from his beaming smiles, he felt, for a time at least, dozens of years younger.

Years before, when still able to do a good day's work, he walked to Ipswich to revisit his old home, a distance of about 160 miles, which he accomplished in four days, and returned in the same time. He had been specially struck by the building of a new post-office there—this must have been at least thirty years before the time of which I am writing. One of my brothers who lived near Ipswich was visiting me, and I introduced him to the old man, knowing that they would have common interests. No sooner did Tricker hear that my brother had just come from Ipswich than he inquired anxiously if the new post-office was finished. "Oh yes, and pulled down some years ago, and a new one built!" Tricker was astonished; the years had evidently slipped by him unnoticed, and no record of dates remained in his memory.

Tricker often got a little mixed in the names of novelties or in unusual words. I chanced to pass him one day along the road, on my omnicycle, and next time I saw him he referred to it, adding: "I didn't know as you'd got a phlorsopher (velocipede and philosopher) "! Some of my land had been occupied by the Romans in very distant days, and coins and pottery were frequently found. Tricker, having heard of the Romans, also of Roman Catholics, jumbled them together, and "reckoned" that the former inhabitants of these fields were "some of those old Romans or Cartholics."

This mixture of words, generally bearing some relation to each other, was not infrequently carried still further by making one word of two. With some of the villagers "conservatory" stood for conservative and tory, and "containment" for concert and entertainment. A messenger who was asked to bring *Daniel Deronda* from the Evesham library returned with the announcement that "Dannel Deronomy" was not available; this appeared to be a confusion between the books of Daniel and Deuteronomy. A cook (not a Worcestershire person) was asked if the papers had come. "Yes; the *Standard* has arrived, but not the Condy's fluid (*Connoisseur*) "! The regatta at Evesham was always "the regretta." An old sexton working in a churchyard, from whom I inquired if there was a bridge over the river, replied: "Only a temperance bridge (temporary bridge)."

Tricker, as a very typical representative of the agricultural labourer in old age, was engaged as model for a figure in a picture by Mr. Chevalier Taylor, then staying in Badsey. He sat in this capacity when work was not very pressing, and day by day used to repair to the artist's lodgings with his tools on his shoulder. His remuneration was half a crown a day—ordinary day wages for an able-bodied man—but he told me that the inaction was very trying, and that a day as model was much more exacting than a day's work on the farm.

When the old man could no longer complete even a short day's work, and suffered from the cold in winter, he decided to go to the workhouse for a time, but he was out again before the cuckoo was singing, and we found him light jobs "by the piece," so that he could work for as long or as short a time as suited him. He was most grateful for any assistance, and told me that "A little help is worth a deal of sympathy." Eventually he became a permanent inmate of the workhouse, much to my grief; but it is, of course, impossible to run a farm on which heavy poor-rate has to be paid, as a philanthropic institution. The difficulty with aged and infirm persons is not so much food and maintenance as the necessity for nursing and supervision, which are expensive and difficult to arrange. Tricker told me that he could live on sixpence a day, and if it had been a question of food only, and our village could have cut itself adrift from the Union and the rates it entailed, we could easily have more than kept the poor old man to the end of his days in comfort. For years he was the only parishioner receiving any help from the immense sum the parish annually paid in rates. I have heard it said that out of every shilling of the ratepayer's contributions the poor people only get twopence or its equivalent, the officials and administration expenses absorbing the remaining tenpence.

My first gardener had been employed at the Manor, when I came, for very many years, and at the end of ten more he was obliged to resign through old age. He had planted the poplars round the mill-pond in his earliest days, and, among other trees, the beautiful weeping wych-elm on the lawn behind the house. The weeping effect he produced by beheading the tree when quite small and grafting it with a slip of the weeping variety, and the junction was still plainly visible. It was a symmetrical and, especially when in bloom, a lovely tree, but as the blossoms died and scattered themselves all over the grass, they worried the methodical old man, and every spring he wished it had never been planted. It had flourished amazingly, and we could comfortably find sitting room at tea for sixty or seventy people at a garden-party in its shade.

He was an excellent gardener, but did not care about novelties in flowers, though at one time he made a hobby of raising new kinds of potatoes. His greatest success was the original Ashleaf variety, the stock of which he sold to Mr. Myatt for a guinea, and which was afterwards introduced to the public as "Myatt's Early Ashleaf." It was one of the best potatoes ever grown, very early, and splendid in quality, and it was unfortunate that he parted with it so cheaply, though, of course, the purchaser of the first few tubers had no idea of its immense potential value, and possibly, like so many novelties, it might have proved a failure. It is still in cultivation, though its constitution is impaired, like that of all potatoes of long standing. Later on I shall have more to say about this unfortunate tendency to deterioration.

J. E. was one of my most reliable men, working for me, first as under-carter and afterwards as head carter, for, I think, altogether twenty-six years; he was well educated and a great reader, quiet and somewhat reserved, and though his humour did not lie on the surface, he could appreciate a joke. My recollections of him, after his steadiness and reliability, are chiefly of his personal mishaps, for he was an unlucky man in this particular.

I was on my round one morning when I met a breathless carter-boy making for the village. Asked where he was off to, "Please, sir," he replied, "I be to fetch Master E. another pair of trowsers!" "Trousers," said I; "what on earth for?" "Please, sir, the bull ha' ripped 'em!" I hurried on, and soon saw that it was no laughing matter, for I found poor E. in a terrible plight of rags and tatters, sitting in a cart-shed in some outlying buildings, on a roller. The cowman was standing by holding a Jersey bull. The story was soon told. The cowman, having to go into the yard, had asked E. to hold the bull a minute. Unfortunately, the animal had only a halter on him, the cowman having omitted to bring the stick, with hook and swivel, to attach to the bull's nose-ring. No sooner was the cowman out of sight than the bull began to fret, and, turning upon E., knocked him down between a mangoldbury and the outside wall of the yard. In this position he was unable to get a direct attack upon the man, but he managed to gore him badly and tear his clothes to pieces. The cowman, hearing E. calling, came back and rescued him, the bull becoming quite docile with his regular attendant. Poor E. was black and blue when he got home in the pony-cart, and was laid up for many weeks afterwards. He undoubtedly had a very narrow escape. It is curious that, though the Jersey cows are the most docile of any kind, the bulls are the most uncertain and, when annoyed, savage; I had trouble with two or three, and one became so dangerous that he had to be killed in his stall.

E.'s bad luck overtook him again when returning from Evesham with, fortunately, an empty waggon and team; one of the horses was startled, and E. ran forwards to catch the reins. By some means he fell, and the waggon-wheels passed over him; had it been full, as it was on the outward journey, with a heavy load of beans, it would have been a serious matter, but nevertheless he suffered a great deal for some time afterwards.

J. E. must have walked many hundreds of miles among my hops with the horses drawing "the mistifier," a syringing machine which pumped a mist-like spray of soft soap and quassia solution upon the under-side of the hop-leaves, when attacked by the aphis blight; and he must have destroyed many millions of aphides, for the blight was an annual occurrence at Aldington, and taxed our energies to the utmost at one of the busiest times of year.

Mrs. J. E. was, and is, one of those kind persons always ready to do a good turn to a neighbour. She and her husband brought up a large family, all of whom have done well, and a son in the Grenadier Guards especially distinguished himself in the war. She has a remarkable memory for dates of birthdays, weddings, and such-like events, and often writes us one of her interesting letters, full of information of the old village.

I had many experiences of the honesty of the agricultural labourer, but one especially remains in my mind. I. P., a man living some two miles from Aldington, regularly walked the four miles there and back for many years, in addition to his day's work. He was an excellent drainer, and a most useful all-round man, exceedingly strong and willing, bright and cheerful in conversation, and I had a very high opinion of him. I had just reached the end of a long pay when he reappeared—having taken his wages earlier in the proceedings—and asked if I had made a mistake in his money; a sovereign was missing, and he could not remember actually taking it from the table with the rest of the cash. I at once balanced my payments and receipts for the evening, but they corresponded exactly. It was a serious matter, as a half-year's rent was due to the owner of his cottage that day, and I. P. was one of those men who take a pride in paying up with punctuality. I could see, as he realized that the sovereign was lost, how disappointed and worried he felt, and being glad of an opportunity to do him a good turn, I gave him another, and sent him away very grateful. Later still he returned again, placed a sovereign on my table, and said that he had nearly reached home when he felt something hard against his knee, inside his corduroys, where he found the missing coin; there was a hole in his pocket, but the encircling string which labourers tie below the knee had prevented its escape.

CHAPTER VI

CHARACTERISTICS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS AND VILLAGERS

> "My crown is in my heart, not on my head:
> Not deck'd with diamonds and Indian stones,
> Nor to be seen: my crown is called content."
>
> *3 Henry VI.*

THE agricultural labourer, and the countryman generally, does not recognize any form of property beyond land, houses, buildings, farm stock, and visible chattels. A groom whom I questioned concerning a new-comer, a wealthy man, in the neighbourhood, summed him up thus: "Oh, not much account—only one hoss and a brougham!" A railway may run through the parish, worth millions of invested capital, but the labourer does not recognize it as such, and a farmer, employing a few men and with two or three thousand pounds in farm stock, is a bigger man in his eyes than a rich man whose capital is invisible.

The labourer in the days of which I am writing was inclined to be suspicious of savings banks and deposit accounts at a banker's ; his savings represented a vast amount of hard work and self-denial; and he looked askance at security other than an old stocking or a teapot. He had heard of banks breaking, and felt uncomfortable about them. A story was current in my neighbourhood of a Warwickshire bank in difficulties, where a run was in progress. A van appeared, from which many heavy sacks were carried into the bank, in the presence of the crowd waiting outside to draw out their money. Some of the sacks were seen to be open, and apparently full of sovereigns; confidence was restored, and the run ceased. Later, when all danger was over, it transpired that these supposed resources were fictitious, for the open sacks contained only corn with a thin layer of gold on the top.

Formerly it was said of a certain street in Evesham, chiefly inhabited by market-gardeners and their labourers, that the houses contained more gold than both the banks in the town, and I have no doubt that, even at the present day, there is an immense amount of hoarded money in country places. Only a short while ago, long after the commencement of the Great War, the sale of a small property took place in my neighbourhood, when the purchaser paid down in gold a sum of £600, the bulk of which had earned no interest during the years of collection. No doubt people, as a rule, in these days of war bonds and certificates, have a better idea of investment, but probably a vast sum in possible loans has been lost to the Government through want of previous information on the subject. It should have been a simple matter, during the last fifty years of compulsory education, to teach the rudiments of finance in the elementary schools, and I commend the matter as worth the consideration of educational enthusiasts.

The labourer's attitude, as I have said, is suspicious towards lawyers. I was chatting with a man, specially taken on for harvest, who expressed doubts of them; he continued, " If anybody were to leave me a matter of fifty pounds or so, I'd freely give it 'em," meaning that by the time all charges were paid he would not expect more than a trifle, because he supposed stamps and duties to be a part of the lawyer's remuneration, and that very little would be left when all was paid.

I was once discussing farming matters with a labourer when prospects were looking very black, and ended by saying that I expected soon to be in the workhouse. " Ah, sir," said he," I wish I were no nearer the workhouse nor you be !" It should not be forgotten that the agricultural labourer's financial horizon does not extend much beyond the next pay night, and were it not for the generosity of his neighbours—for the poor are exceedingly good to each other in times of stress—a few weeks' illness or unemployment, especially where the children are too young to earn anything, may find him at the end of his resources.

Almost the first time I went to Evesham, in passing Chipping Norton Junction—now Kingham—three or four men on the platform, in charge of the police, attracted my attention. I was told that they were rioters, guilty of a breach of the peace in connection with the National Agricultural Labourers' Union, then under the leadership of Joseph Arch. Being so close to my new neighbourhood, where I was just beginning farming, the incident was somewhat of a shock. Arch undoubtedly was the chief instrument in raising the agricultural labourer's wages to the extent of two or three shillings a week, and the increase was justified, as every necessity was dear at the time, owing to the great activity of trade towards the end of the sixties. The farmers resisted the rise only because, already in the early seventies, the flood of American competition in corn-growing was reducing values of our own produce; and as all manufactured goods which the farmer required had largely increased in price, he did not see his way to incur a higher labour bill.

Arch sent a messenger to me a few years later, to ask permission to hold a meeting in Aldington in one of my meadows. I saw at once that opposition would only stimulate antagonism, and consented. The meeting was held, but only a few labourers attended, and no farmers, and agitation, so far as we were concerned, died down. One or two of my men were, I think, members of the Union, but having already obtained the increased wages there was nothing more to be gained for themselves by so continuing, and they soon dropped out of the list. Eventually the organization collapsed. Arch was a labourer himself, and exceedingly clever at "laying" hedges, or "pleaching," as it is still called, and was called by Shakespeare in *Much Ado About Nothing*:

> "Bid her steal into the pleached bower,
> Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,
> Forbid the sun to enter."

Pleaching is a method of reducing and renovating an overgrown hedge by which all old and exhausted wood is cut out, leaving live vertical stakes at intervals, and winding the young stuff in and out of them in basket-making fashion, after notching it at the base to allow of bending it down without breakage. Arch was a native of Warwickshire, the home of this art; it takes a skilled man to ensure a good result, but when well done an excellent hedge is produced after two or three years' growth. The quickset or whitethorn (May) makes the strongest and most impervious hedge, and it flourishes amazingly on the stiff clay soils of the Lias formation in that county and its neighbour Worcestershire.

I have often wondered at, and admired, the labourer's resignation and fortitude in adversity; a discontented or surly face is rarely seen among them; they have, like most people, to live lives of self-sacrifice, frugality, and industry, which doubtless bring their own compensation, for the exercise and habit of these very virtues tend to the cheerfulness and courage which never give up. Possibly, too, the open-air life, the vitalizing sunshine, the sound sleep, and the regularity of the routine, endows them with an enviable power of enjoyment of what some would consider trifles. After a long day out of doors in the natural beauty of the country, who shall say that the labourer's appetite for his evening meal, his pipe of tobacco beside his bright fireside, and his detachment from the outside world, do not afford him as great or greater enjoyment than the elaborate luxury of the millionaire, with his innumerable distractions and responsibilities ?

The labourer has, as I have said, little appreciation of the invisible or what does not appeal strongly to his senses; he cannot understand, for instance, that a small bag of chemical fertilizer, in the form of a grey, inoffensive powder, can contain as great a potentiality for the nutrition of crops as a cartload of evil-smelling material from the farmyard; nor is he aware that, in the case of the latter, he has to load and unload 90 pounds or thereabouts of worthless water in every 100 pounds with which he deals. Possibly, however, his preference for the natural fertilizer is not wholly misplaced, for there is, no doubt, much still to be learned concerning the relative values of natural and artificial compounds with special reference to the bacterial inoculation of the soil and its influence on vegetable life.

He is not without some æsthetic feeling for the glories of Nature daily before him, and though like Peter Bell, of whom we are told that

> " A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more,"

and putting aside the metaphysical analogy and the moral teaching which are presented by every tree and plant, he enjoys, I know, the simple beauty of the flower itself, the exhilarating freshness of the bright spring morning, the prodigality of the summer foliage, the ripe autumnal glow of the harvest-field, and the sparkling frost of a winter's day. But he very rarely expresses his enthusiasm in superlatives: " a usefulish lot," and " a smartish few," meaning in Worcestershire " a very good lot," and " a great many," is about the limit to which he will commit himself. His natural reticence in serious situations and calamity, and his reserve in the outlet of feeling by vocal expression, give a wrong impression of its real depth, and may even convey the impression of callousness to anyone not conversant with the working of his mind.

To a nephew of mine who was surprised to see his gardener's little son leaving the garden, the man explained: " That little fellow be come to tell I a middlinish bit of news; 'e come to say as his little sister be de-ad." Notice the " middlinish bit of news," where a much stronger expression would have been justified, and note the restraint as to his loss, suggesting an unfeeling mind, though in reality very far from the grief he was shy of expressing.

An old woman in a parish adjoining mine, having lost a child, received the condolences of a visitor with, " Yes, mum; we seems to be regular unlucky, for only a few weeks ago we lost a pig."

A lady well known to me, the daughter of the Vicar of a Cumberland parish, was calling on a woman whose husband had died a few days previously, and expressing her sympathy with the widow in her affliction, spoke of the sadness of the circumstances. The widow thanked her visitor, and added: " You know, miss, we was to have killed a pig that week, but there, we couldn't 'ave 'em both about at the same time " !

All these incidents suggest callousness, but in reality they were plain statements of fact from persons with a limited vocabulary and unskilled in the niceties of polished language.

Another incident will illustrate how faulty expression may give an unintended impression. A lady, calling at a cottage, exclaimed with appreciation at the fragrant odour of frying bacon which greeted her. The cottager was busy with it at the fire. " Yes, miss," she said, " it *is* nice to 'ave a bit of bacon as you've waited on yourself "—of course, referring to the fact that she knew the animal was always fed on really good food, an important and reassuring condition, though a tender heart might have regretted the sacrifice of an intimate creature which some would have regarded almost as a pet.

The cottager does not look upon his pig in that light; it is fed well and comfortably housed with a definite object, and very little love is lost between the pig and his master. Children in some places in Worcestershire were formerly kept at home in order to be present on the great occasion of the pig's obsequies. A woman, asked why her children were absent from school, replied: " Well, sir, you see, we killed our pig that day, and I kept the children at home for a treat; there's no harm in that, sir, I'm sure, for pigs allus dies without malice !"

Villagers accept the novel significations which time or fashion gradually confer upon old words very unreadily. I could see, at first, that they were puzzled by my use of the word "awful," now long adopted generally to strengthen a statement, very much as they themselves make use of "terrible," "desp'rate," or "de-adly." They connect the word "friend" with the signification "benefactor" only; a man, speaking of someone born with a little inherited fortune, said that "his friends lived before him." I told an old labourer that my little daughter considered him a great friend of hers. He looked puzzled, and replied: "Well, I don't know as I ever gave her anything." They still distinguish between two words now carrying the same meaning. I told a man that I was afraid some work he had for me would give him a lot of trouble. He corrected me: "'Twill be no *trouble*, master, only *labour*."

The labourer does not appreciate a sudden order or an unreasonable change in work once commenced; he does not like being taken by surprise in such matters: the necessary tool—for farm labourers find their own hand implements—may not be readily available, may be out of order, require grinding, or a visit to the blacksmith's for repair or readjustment. The wise master introduces the subject, whenever possible, gradually beforehand. "We shall have to think about wheat-hoeing, mowing, potato-digging, next week," prepares the man for the occasion, so that when the time comes he has his hoe, axe, scythe, or bill-hook, as the case may be, ready. The job, too, may demand some special clothing—hedging gloves, gaiters, new shoes, and so forth.

He is often suspicious of new arrangements or alteration of hours, and is inclined to attribute an ulterior motive to the proposer of any change in the unwritten but long-accustomed laws which govern his habits; he lives in a groove into which by degrees abuses may have crept, and some alteration may have become imperative.

When we introduced a coal club for the villagers, with the idea of buying several trucks at lowest cash price, collecting their contributions week by week during the previous summer, when good wages were being earned, and delivering the coal gratis in my carts shortly before winter, they seemed very doubtful as to the advantage of joining. Some saw the advantage at once, knowing the high prices of single half-tons or hundredweights delivered in coal-merchants' carts; others would "let us know in a day or two," wanted time to consider the matter, being taken "unawares"; others, assured that nobody would undertake such a troublesome business without an eye to personal profit, but anxious not to offend my daughter, who was visiting each cottage, replied: "Oh yes, miss, if 'tis to do *you* any good"! Eventually, however, they were all satisfied and very grateful, appreciating the fact that the cartage was not charged for, and that they were getting much better coal than before at a lower price.

Village people, I am afraid, are rather fond of horrors; the newspaper accounts of events which come under that description, such as murders, suicides, and sensational trials, afford, apparently, much interest. A man was working for me on some repairs close to my door; as he was a stranger, I tried, as usual, to induce him to talk whenever I passed. I had no success and could not get a word out of him, until, one morning, I chanced to see a sensational headline in a local paper about a suicide in a neighbouring town. On passing my workman, he immediately broke out in great excitement, "Did you read in the paper about that bloke who went to his father's house at W——, sat down on the doorstep, and cut his throat?" The account had evidently seized upon his imagination, and had thoroughly roused him out of himself, but the following day he was as silent as before.

Births, marriages, and deaths are interesting topics in the village, and perhaps with reason, for, after all, they are the most important events in our lives, and in the villages most of the cottagers are more or less related. All the inhabitants were much excited when a poor old widow, living very near my house, sitting on a low circular stone parapet round her well, lost her balance in some way, fell in, and was drowned. I was foreman of the jury at the inquest, and after hearing the evidence, which amounted to no more than the finding of the body soon after the event, the coroner expressed his opinion that it was a case of accidental death, with which I at once concurred. With some reluctance, the other jurymen agreed; they had, I imagine, as usual, made up their minds for a more sensational verdict, but scarcely liked to suggest it, and a verdict of accidental death was accordingly returned. Afterwards I heard that the villagers were saying that it was very kind of me to bring in such an indulgent verdict, but they "knowed very well it was suicide."

I was invited to the wedding feast of my bailiff's daughter, and being, I suppose, regarded as the principal guest, was, according to custom, requested to carve the excellent leg of mutton which formed the *pièce de résistance*. The parish clerk, considerably over eighty at the time, was one of the most sprightly members of the company; he kept us interested with historical recollections going back to the Battle of Waterloo, and spoke of Wellington and Napoleon almost as familiarly as we now speak of Earl Haig and the Kaiser. He had a strong sense of humour, and, after a very hearty meal, announced that he didn't know how it was, but he'd "sort of lost his appetite," pretending to regard the fact as an injury, premeditated by the hospitality of our host and hostess.

The labourer dearly loves a grievance, not exactly for its own sake, but because it affords an interesting topic of conversation. One autumn, returning from a holiday in the Isle of Wight, I found the whole village agog with the first County Council election. A magistrate candidate, in the neighbouring village of Broadway, was to be opposed by an Aldington man. I found a local committee holding excited partisan meetings on behalf of the latter, active canvassing going on, a villager appointed as secretary (always called "seckert*ary*" in these parts), and the election the sole topic of conversation. The village people, always delighted in the possession of a common enemy and a common cause, were making the election a village affair, as opposed to the village of the other candidate;

popular feeling was running very high, Badsey, of course, joining up with Aldington as strong allies. Some young men had lately been before the magistrates at Evesham, and fined for obstructing the footpath, and the magistrate candidate was selected as the scapegoat for the affront to our united villages. At the election the Aldington man was returned, and his supporters started with him on a triumphal progress through the constituency. Of course, they visited Broadway, to crow over the conquered village, but the wind was somewhat taken out of their sails when the defeated candidate at once came forward, shook hands with his opponent, and congratulated him upon his success! The return journey was not so hilarious; one of the men of Broadway, noticing a string of carts in the procession, conveying sympathizers with the victor, in addition to the owners of the vehicles—thus rendering the latter liable to the carriage duty of 15s. each—and strongly resenting the spirit which brought the victorious party to Broadway, sent a telegram to the Superintendent of Police at Evesham, who met the returning procession and took down their names, with the ultimate result of a substantial haul in fines for the excise!

During the Boer War the common foe was, of course, "Old Kruger" (with a soft *g*), and we hoisted the Union Jack in front of the Manor whenever our side scored a substantial success. The news of Lord Roberts's victory at Paardeburg reached Badsey in the morning, after the papers, and, returning by road from my farm round, I heard great rejoicings and cheering from the direction of the village. Meeting a boy, I learned that "Old Cronje" was defeated and a prisoner, with "'leven thousand men!"—a report which proved to be correct with the trifling discount of 9,000 of the latter! The same spirit of union for a common cause was almost as evident at that time as in the far more strenuous struggle of 1914–1918, and so long as England to herself remains but true, doubtless our enemies will fulfil the part assigned to them by the greatest of English poets.

A love of the marvellous is a common characteristic of country village folks, and I have already referred to such beliefs in the supernatural among my men. We had our own "white lady" on the highroad where it turns off to Aldington, though I never met anyone who had seen her; there were, too, signs and wonders before approaching deaths, and a thrilling story of a headless calf in the neighbourhood.

An old house at Badsey, once a *hospitium* or sanatorium for sick monks from Evesham Abbey in pre-Reformation days, was reported to be haunted, and people told tales of "the old fellows rattling about again" of a night. Probably these beliefs had been encouraged in former times by the monks themselves, to prevent the villagers prying too closely into their occupations; and no doubt the scattered individuals of the same body originated the popular theory that the Abbey lands of which they were dispossessed would never, owing to a curse, pass by inheritance in the direct line from father to eldest son—an event that in the course of nature often fails, though by no means invariably.

In recent years a startling story has been told, and even appeared in a local paper, of a ghostly adventure near the Aldington turning. A young lady (not a native), riding her bicycle to Evesham from Badsey, passed, machine and all, right through an apparition which suddenly crossed her path, without any resulting fall.

In connection with the monk's *hospitium* I lately made an interesting discovery as to the origin of a curious name of one of my fields, which had always puzzled me. The field adjoined the *hospitium*, and was always known as "the Signhurst." Field-names are a very interesting study, they usually bear some significance to a peculiarity in the field itself, or its position with reference to its surroundings, and it has always been a hobby of mine to trace their derivations. The word "Signhurst" presented no clue to its origin except the Anglo-Saxon "hurst," signifying a wood, but there was no appearance or tradition of any wood having ever occupied the spot, and the land was so good, and so well situated as to aspect, that it was unlikely to have been such a site, even in Anglo-Saxon days. I stumbled upon a passage in May's *History of Evesham* which mentioned the "Seyne House," meaning "Sane House," the equivalent of the modern word "sanatorium," and I saw at once the origin of the corrupted word "Signhurst"—the field near the Seyne House.

Wages are, of course, the crowning reward of the working-man's week; throughout the whole of my time 15s. a week was the recognized pay for six full summer days—"a very little to receive, but a good deal to pay away," as a neighbour once said. During harvest, and at piece-work, more money was earned, and it always pleased me that I could pay much better prices for piece-work among the hops than for piece-work at wheat-hoeing or on similar unremunerative crops. The reason is obvious: the hoeing of an acre of wheat, a crop which might possibly return a matter of £10 per acre, takes no more manual effort than the hoeing of an acre of hops, where a gross return of £70 or £80 per acre is not unusual, and is sometimes considerably exceeded.

As wages must eventually always depend upon prices of produce raised by the labour for which such wages are expended, when the agricultural labourer buys his bread he is only buying back his own labour in a concrete form plus the other relative expenses on the farm, and the cost of milling, baking, and distribution, so that when he gets a high price for his labour he must expect to pay a high price for his food; and when the price of food is reduced the price of his labour also falls. Here, again, the rudiments of economics, taught in the schools, would conduce to his understanding the position, and the eradication of discontent.

It is impossible, economically speaking, to defend the system of equal wages to the most capable and industrious men on the one hand and to inefficient slackers on the other; and as a graduated scale of payment, according to results, is not practicable without arousing ill-feeling and jealousy, the farmer's only remedy is to get rid of the slackers. Inefficiency and slacking are often due to a man's enfeebled mental and physical condition, owing to neglect in his bringing up as a child, or to insufficient or unwholesome food provided by an improvident wife in his home.

I was fortunate in meeting with very few of these degenerates, but I remember one tall, delicate-looking man who seemed unable to apply either his strength or his attention to his work. He was denounced by the foreman under whom he worked as not only useless, but "the starvenest wretch as ever I see," intended to convey the impression, and confirming my own conclusion, that cold and hunger were really the cause of his inability to render a fair day's work.

I remember, too, when some elderly women, with a younger one, were hay-making, one of the old ladies, dragging the big "heel-rake" behind the waggon in course of loading—always rather a tough job—tried to induce the younger woman to take her place with, "Here, Sally, thee take a turn at it; thee be a better 'ooman nor I be." My bailiff, overhearing, at once interposed: "Be she a better 'ooman than thee, Betsy, ov a Saturday night [pay-night]?"

Hard-and-fast laws and fixed prices for agricultural labour will be found very difficult to maintain as to piece-work; no wage board can fix just prices, because conditions are so variable. Of two men cutting corn on separate plots in the same field, the one at 12s. an acre may really earn more money *per diem* than another man at 15s. an acre on the other side of the field, owing to the difference in the weight of the crop or its condition, it being, perhaps, erect in the first case, and laid by heavy storms in the second.

There is, too, a vast difference in the value of boys' work and usefulness; one may easily be worth double another, yet no difference is allowable by the new law; or one may demoralize another, so that two are less effective than one. A good old saying puts the matter very plainly: "One boy's a boy, two boys are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all!"

It is, in fact, ridiculous for townspeople, lawyers, and manufacturers to legislate for the labour of the farm; they do not understand that indoor labour in the workshop or factory, under regular conditions and with unvarying materials, is totally different from labour out of doors, in constantly changing conditions of season, weather, and the resulting crops dealt with. An old maxim of the Worcestershire labourer who, without a fixed place, took on piece-work at specially busy times, will confirm this: "Go to a good farmer for wheat-hoeing, and to a bad one for harvesting." I may explain that the fields of the good farmer are clean and nearly free from weeds, so that hoeing is a comparatively light job; but the same, or nearly the same, price per acre is paid by the bad farmer, whose corn is overrun with weeds, entailing much more time and harder work. On the other hand, the good farmer's wheat crop is much heavier than that of the bad, and, the prices for cutting being again very similar, more money *per diem* can be earned at harvest on the farm of the latter.

It is a sound old Worcestershire saying that "the time to hoe is when there are no weeds"—apparently a paradox, but the meaning is simple: when no weeds are to be seen above ground there are always millions of tiny seedlings just below the surface ready to increase and multiply wonderfully with a shower of rain; if attacked at the seedling stage, these can be slaughtered in battalions, with far greater ease and efficacy than when they become deep-rooted and established, and dominate the crop.

I have heard of farmers to whom pay-night was a sore trial; one such was frequently known to mount his horse and gallop away just before his men appeared: how he settled eventually I do not know. Some farmers will pay out of doors on their rounds, having a rooted objection to business of any kind under a roof; and one small farmer, I was told, always passed the cash to his men behind his back so that he might not have the agony of parting actually before his eyes.

A labourer is supposed to come to work in his master's time and go home in his own, thus sharing the necessary loss, and, as a rule, they are fairly punctual; but one defaulter in this particular will waste many moments of a whole gang working together, as it seems to be etiquette not to begin till they are all present. I have often heard, too, sarcastic comparisons made between the day-man and "the any-time-of-day man."

The cottagers have their feuds, and the use of joint wash-houses or baking-ovens between two or more adjoining cottages is a frequent source. I have had excited wives of tenants coming to me at unseasonable hours to settle these differences, and I found it a very difficult business to reconcile the disputants. I could only visit the *locus in quo* and arrange fixed and separate days and regulations; but though the wisdom of Solomon may administer justice in a dispute, it is impossible to ensure a really peaceful solution that will endure.

Sometimes feuds, originating in such or similar causes, were maintained for years by neighbours living with only a 9-inch party wall between them, and daily meetings outside, to the extent of not even "passing the time of day." At last, however, in a day of distress to one, the heart of the unafflicted other would melt, and after an offer of help, or actual assistance, kind relations would be once more established. Or a peace offering, in the shape of a dish of good pig-meat, sent over with a kind message, would restore more genial conditions, and they would return to happy and neighbourly familiarity.

I once employed an old Dorset labourer, a tall, slim, aristocratic figure, with an elegant, refined nose to match; he bore the well-known name of an ancient and distinguished Dorset family, and I have no doubt was well descended. He was decidedly a canny, not to say crafty, man. I gave him a holiday at Whitsuntide to visit his old home, but he overran the time agreed upon and returned some days late. Before I could begin the rebuke I proposed to administer, he produced a charming photograph of a ruined abbey near his old locality, and handed it to me as a present.

"I thought upon you, master, while I was away, and knowing as you was fond of ancient things I've brought you this picture." I was completely disarmed, and the rebuke had to be postponed *sine die.*

As I was talking one day to my bailiff—one of the men who lived a mile away standing near—he said: "Tom, here, is always the first man to arrive in the morning; I have never known him to be late." I congratulated Tom, and asked what time he went to bed: "Oh, about seven o'clock!" He was, in fact, a lonely old bachelor, and, being "no scholard," it saved lights and firing to be early to bed.

This man, like many villagers, had very vague ideas of geography. To save the trouble of cooking, he lived largely on American tinned beef, and got chaffed about it by his fellow-workers. "How be you getting on with the 'Merican biff?" Tom was asked. "Oh," said he, "never no more 'Merican biff for me." "How's that, Tom?" "Why, the other day I found a trouser-button in it!" The point of this story lies in the fact that the Russo-Turkish war was proceeding at the time. *Tempora mutantur,* we were then encouraging Turkey against Russia, though the latter had declared war to avenge the atrocities in Bulgaria of which the Turks were guilty, while in the recent struggle the position was almost exactly reversed.

There was then a violent militant feeling here in Britain, and excited crowds were singing:

> "We don't want to fight but, by Jingo, if we do,
> We've got the ships, we've got the men,
> We've got the money too."

Hence the expression "Jingoism," which we often hear to-day, though, perhaps, the origin is now almost forgotten.

It is not unusual to see villagers, as married couples, complete contrasts to each other in appearance and character—one fat and jolly, the other thin and miserable; one happy and contented, the other grumbling and morose; one open-hearted and generous, the other close and parsimonious. In matrimony people are said to choose their opposites, and possibly, as time goes on, the difference in their appearance and dispositions becomes still more definitely developed.

The labourer understands sarcasm and makes use of it himself, but irony is often lost upon him. Passing an old man on a pouring wet day, I greeted him, adding, "Nice morning, isn't it?" He stared, hesitated, and then, "Well, it would be if it wasn't for the rain!" I only remember one surly man—not one of my workers or tenants. He was scraping a very muddy road, and I remarked, for something to say, "Makes it look better, doesn't it?" All I got in reply was, "I shouldn't do it if it didn't!"

It is important, in managing a mixed lot of farm labourers, to find out each man's special gift, making him the responsible person when the time or opportunity arrives for its application. There are men, excellent with horses, who have no love of steam-driven machinery, and *vice versa;* and there are men who are capable at small details, yet unable to take comprehensive views.

Responsibility is the life-blood of efficiency, and men can always be found upon whom responsibility will act like a charm, producing quickened perception, interest, foresight, economy, resource, industry, and all the characteristics that responsibility demands. Put the square peg in the square hole, the round peg in the round hole; show the man you have confidence in him, teach him to act on his own initiative in all the lesser matters that concern his job, coming only to the master in those larger considerations to which the latter are subordinate, and my experience is that your confidence will not be betrayed, and that he will save you an immense amount of tiresome detail.

The most difficult man to deal with is the over-confident "know-all"; he is always ready to oppose experience—often dearly bought—with his superior knowledge, he can suggest a quicker or a cheaper way of doing everything, and in his last place he "never saw" your system followed. He is the penny-wise and pound-foolish individual, and his methods are "near enough." It has been said that at twenty a man knows everything, at forty he is not quite so sure, and at sixty he is certain that he knows nothing at all; but there are exceptions even to this rule, who continue all their lives thinking more and more of their own opinions, and completely satisfied with their own methods. On the other hand, the master will always find, among the more experienced, men from whom much is to be learnt; they are generally diffident and not too ready to hazard an opinion, but when consulted they can give very valuable help. I willingly acknowledge my indebtedness to my old hands, their well-founded convictions that were the fruit of long years of practical experience, and their readiness to impart them in times of doubt and difficulty.

Just as bad-tempered grooms make nervous, bad-tempered horses; rough and noisy cattle-men, fidgety cows; ill-trained dogs and savage shepherds, sheep wild and difficult to approach; so does the bad-tempered, impatient, or slovenly master make men with the same bad qualities, when a smile or a kind word will bring out all that is good in a man and produce the best results in his work.

I began my farming with four dear old women, working on the land, when wanted for light jobs; the youngest must have been fifty at least. They received the time-honoured wage of tenpence a day, and worked, or talked, about eight hours. They loved to work near the main road, discussing the natural history of the occupants of passing carts or carriages. They knew something comic, tragic, or compromising about everybody, and expressed themselves with epigrammatic force. A farmer occupant of a neighbouring farm in long-past days, was a favourite subject of such recollections. After relating how "he were a random duke," and recalling his habits, one old lady would conclude the recital with an account of his last days, adding, as if everything was thereby finally condoned: "But there, 'e was just as nice a carpse as ever I see, and I was a'most minded to put his paddle [thistle-spud] beside him in his coffin, for he was always a-diggin' and a-delvin' about with it."

One member of this quartet, when ill, had a dish of minced mutton sent her in the hopes of tempting her appetite. She eyed the gift with disfavour, and announced with scorn that "she preferred to chew her meat herself!"

In due course these old ladies retired from active service and younger women took their places; women were especially necessary in the hop-yards for the important operation of tying the selected bines to the poles with rushes and pulling out those which were superfluous. It was difficult, at first, to accustom them to the fact that the hop always twines the way of the sun, whilst the kidney bean takes the opposite course. And there was a problem which greatly exercised their minds: How were they to reach the hops at the tops of the poles—14 feet from the ground—when the time came? It did not occur to them that it was possible to cut the bine and pull up the pole. They soon became very quick and expert at the tying, and their well-worn wedding-rings, telling of a busy life, would flash brightly in the sunshine as they tenderly coaxed the brittle bines round the base of the poles, securing them with the rush tied in a special slip-knot, so that it easily expanded as the bine enlarged.

Women are splendid at all kinds of light farm work whenever deftness and gentle touch are required, such as hop-tying and picking, or gathering small fruit like currants, raspberries, and strawberries; but I do not consider them in the least capable of taking the place of men in outdoor work which demands muscular strength and endurance and the ability to withstand severe heat or bitter cold or wet ground under foot, through all the varying seasons. Village women have, too, their home duties to attend to, and it is most important that their men-folk should be suitably fed and their houses kept clean and attractive.

On the farm of my son-in-law, in Warwickshire, I have seen something of the work of land girls, to the number of seventy or more, for whom he provided a well-organized camp with a competent lady Captain; and I know how useful they proved in the emergency caused by the War, but I still adhere to my former conclusion as to the more strenuous forms of farm labour, without in the least detracting from my admiration for the courage and patriotism that brought them forward.

I know one woman, however, who quite successfully undertakes very strenuous garden work, including digging, having been inured to it at a very early age. If she could be spared from her own work to take the position of instructress for young girls determined to make the land their chief employment, they would be saved a vast amount of unnecessary fatigue and labour by learning the art of using spades, forks, hoes, and rakes in the way that experience teaches, relying more upon the weight and designed capabilities of the tool to do the work than upon their own untrained muscles.

We could always get a supply of excellent maids for house-work from among the village families; they began very young, coming in for a few hours daily to help the regular staff, and, as these left or got married, they were ready trained to take their places. These girls were quite free from the self-importance of the present-day domestic, but I remember one nice village girl about whom we inquired as a likely maid who, it then appeared, was engaged to marry a thriving small tradesman. The girl's mother, being over-elated at her daughter's apparently brilliant prospects of independence, rejected the proposal with some hauteur, adding that her daughter "would soon be keeping her own maid." I fear, however, that she was disappointed, as the course of true love did not run smooth.

We preferred a married man as shepherd, because, when I had only a few cows, he combined his duties with those of cowman; and, bringing in the milk and doing the churning, he was much about the back premises. On one occasion, however, I engaged a young bachelor, partly because he replied, with a knowing smile, to a question as to whether he was married, that he dared say he could be if he liked—which I optimistically took to amount to an announcement of his engagement.

Time went on and he remained a single man, but it was observable that he lingered on his milky way, and was more in evidence in the dairy than his duties appeared to warrant. We concluded that he was attracted by the cook. One day my wife said to another maid: "I can't think why the shepherd spends so much time in the house. I suppose cook is the attraction?" The girl blushed, hesitated, and looked down, but finally courageously murmured: "Please, mum, it's me, mum!" They were married in due course, and we lost an excellent servant.

Some of the village women and girls filled up spare moments with "gloving"; the large kid-glove manufacturers in Worcester supplied the material, cut into shape, and a stand, with a kind of vice divided into spaces the exact size of each stitch, which held the work firmly while the stitching was done by hand; they grew very quick at this work, and turned out the gloves with beautifully even stitches, but I don't think they could earn much at it in a day, and it must have been rather monotonous.

I was interested to read in Mr. Warde Fowler's *Kingham Old and New* an account of a peculiar ceremony—called "Skimmington," by Mr. Hardy, in his *Mayor of Casterbridge*—which took place in Kingham village. I have known of two similar cases, one in Surrey and one at Aldington, under the name of "rough music." The Kingham case was quite parallel with that at Aldington, being a demonstration of popular disapproval of the conduct of a woman resident, in matters arising out of matrimonial differences.

The outraged neighbours collect near the dwelling of the delinquent, having provided themselves with old trays, pots and pans, and anything by means of which a horrible din can be raised, and proceed to serenade the offender. To be the subject of such a demonstration is regarded as a signal disgrace and a most emphatic mark of popular odium. Mr. Warde Fowler tells me, on the authority of a German book on marriage, etc., that "the same sort of din is made at marriage in some parts of Europe to drive evil spirits away from the newly married pair." Possibly, therefore, the custom among our own villagers may have originated with the same idea, and they may formerly have taken the charitable view that evil spirits were responsible for evil deeds, and that their exorcism was a neighbourly duty.

The holiday outings I gave my men were a *quid pro quo* for some hours of overtime in the hay-making, and included a day's wages, all expenses, and a supply of food. They generally went to a large town where an agricultural show was in progress, but I think the sea trips to Ilfracombe and Weston-super-Mare were the most popular, offering as they did much greater novelty. I have a vivid recollection of the preparation of the rations on the previous night: a vast joint of beef nicely roasted and got cold before operations commenced, my wife and daughter making the sandwiches, while I cut up the beef in the kitchen, sometimes in my shirt-sleeves on a hot summer night; mountains of loaves of bread, great slices of cake, and pounds of cheese, completed the provisions. The rations were wrapped in separate papers and placed in a hip-bath, covered with a cloth, and finally kept in a cool building, whence each man took his portion at early dawn. For the sea trips the train took the party to Gloucester and Sharpness, where they embarked upon the steamer.

Many and thrilling were the tales I heard next day; the sea was fairly smooth until they reached the Bristol Channel, but then, if they met a south-west wind, the vessel began to roll, and jovial faces looked thoughtful. I must not dwell upon the delightful horrors of the voyage on such occasions; they were accepted with good-humour and regarded as part of the show, but it was curious that not one of the narrators himself suffered the fate that he so graphically described as the portion of the others. Arrived at their destination, they inspected the town, watched the people on the piers and parades, and the children playing on the sands. The latter created the greatest interest, busy with their spades and buckets, or, as one man expressed it, "little jobs o' draining and summat!"

At Christmas the village children always came in small gangs to sing, or rather chant, a peculiar and very ancient seasonable greeting:

> "I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year,
> A pocket full of money and a cellar full of beer,
> A good fat pig to last you all the year.
> May God bless all friends near!
> A merry, merry Christmas and a happy New Year."

CHAPTER VII

MACHINERY—VILLAGE POLITICS—ASPARAGUS

“ Last week came one to the county town
To preach our poor little army down.”
Maud.

THOUGH machinery has lightened the labour of manual workers to some extent, it entails much more trouble upon masters and foremen, for breakages are frequent and always occur at the busiest time. What with mowers, reapers, thrashing machines, chaff-cutters, root-pulpers, and grain-mills run by steam-power or in connection with horse-gears; hop-washers, separators, and other delicately adjusted novelties, the master must of necessity be something of a mechanic himself. I doubt if machinery is really quite the advantage claimed by theorists and reconstructionists at the present day. Even the thrashing machine, universally adopted, presents disadvantages in comparison with the ancient flail, generally regarded as obsolete, though still to be found in occasional use by the smallholder or allotment occupier. In former times the farmer reserved his thrashing by hand, for the most part, for winter work during severe frost or wet weather, when nothing could be done outside. The immense barns, which still exist, were filled almost to the roof at harvest; thatching was not necessary, and every sheaf was absolutely safe from rain as soon as it was under cover. Continuous winter work was provided for the men, and a daily supply of fresh straw for chaff-cutting and bedding, besides fresh chaff and rowens or cavings for stock throughout the winter. With the thrashing machine in use for ricks, thatching is a necessity, and is often difficult to arrange in the stress of harvest; the machine and engine demand a day’s work for two teams of horses to fetch them, and the cartage and expense of much coal, now so dear. On a small farm extra hands have to be engaged, the straw has to be stacked or carried to the barns, and the same applies to the chaff and rowens. If the weather is damp, straw, chaff, and rowens get stale, mouldy, and unpalatable to the stock, a heavy charge is made for the hire of the machine and the machine men, and the latter require food and drink or payment instead. The machine breaks and bruises many grains of corn, which are thereby damaged for seed or malting, whereas the less urgent flail leaves them intact.

The sound of the thrashing machine gives an impression to outsiders of brisk and remunerative work, but it is cheerful to the farmer only when high prices are ruling. Far otherwise was it for many years before the War, when corn-growers heard only its moaning, despondent note, telling anything but a flattering tale, only varied by an occasional angry growl, when irregular feeding choked its satiated appetite.

From the æsthetic standpoint uncouth and noisy machines, such as mowers and reapers, cannot be compared to a lusty team of men with scythes, in their white shirts, backed by the flowering meadows; or a sunny field of busy harvesters facing a golden wall of corn, and leaving behind them the fresh-shorn stubble dotted with sheaves and nicely balanced shocks. The rattle of the machines, too, is discordant and out of harmony with the peaceful countryside.

It is related of Ruskin that, hearing the insistent rattle of a mowing machine in a meadow adjoining his home by the beautiful Coniston Water, and his sense of the fitting being outraged, he interviewed the owner, and, by an offer to pay the trifling difference between machine and hand labour, induced him to discontinue the annoyance.

As to the relative cost of machine and hand wheat-cutting, quite early in my farming I obtained the opinion of a distinguished farmer, then well known on the Council of the Royal Agricultural Society, Mr. Charles Randell, of

Chadbury, near Evesham, on the subject: "If you can get a good crop," he said, "cut, tied, and stooked by hand at anything like 15s. an acre, don't use a machine. If the corn is ripe it knocks out and wastes quite a bushel of wheat per acre" (worth at that time about 5s., now nearer 9s. or 10s.). "I always bring out my machines, and have them oiled and made ready, *but I don't want to use them.*"

In a wet harvest the machine is unworkable on sticky clay soil, and after a wet summer, when the corn is badly laid and twisted, it makes very poor work, cutting off the ears and scattering them, and leaving a quantity of uncut and untidy straw on the ground.

In my own case my equanimity was never disturbed by a reaping machine, with its unwieldy tossing arms, on my land, for I had to find employment for my full staff of regular hands, specially required for the much more important hop-picking a little later, and it pleased me that they should get the extra pay for harvest work as well.

The cream separator, I admit, is a wonderful invention, and its hum is not unmusical; it provides fresh skim milk for the calves and pigs morning and night, which, as well as the cream, is thoroughly cleansed in the process. The aeration of the skim milk leaves it a most wholesome and nourishing article of diet for the villagers if they could be made to understand its value, and that the removal of the cream takes away only the fat (heating material), leaving the bone and muscle making constituents in the milk. I could never induce my village folk to accept this rudimentary proposition; they fancied that all the goodness was gone with the cream, and though I offered the skim milk at the nominal price of one halfpenny a quart, very few would send their children to fetch it, though they mostly lived within a hundred yards of the dairy.

The hay or straw elevator is one of the greatest helps, saving much heavy overhand labour in rick-building. An old labourer, pointing to one, with great appreciation, on a farm I was visiting, said: "*That's* a machine as will be always kept in the dry and took care on." He spoke from experience of the arduous work of unloading and the passing of heavy weights, sometimes from the bed of the waggon to the summit of the rick; for, as my bailiff often said, "Nobody knows so well where the shoe pinches as the man who has to wear it."

Steam has not done all that was expected of it as an agricultural slave. The steam plough is not a success on heavy land where the ridges are high and irregular in width, and even the steam cultivator has to be used with caution lest the soil should be carried from the ridges to the furrows, and the "squitch" (couch) buried to a depth at which it is difficult to eradicate. The great convenience of steam cultivation is that full advantage can be taken of a short spell of hot, dry weather for fallowing operations, and the soil is left so hollow that it soon bakes and kills the weeds. I fully sympathize with Tennyson's, *Northern Farmer, Old Style :*

> "But summon 'ull come ater meä mayhap wi' 'is kittle o' steäm
> Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds wi' the Devil's oän teäm";

for, except on a large farm with immense fields, the ponderous and ungainly steam tackle gives one a sensation of intrusion. Such a field can be found on a farm between Evesham and Alcester; it contains 300 acres. The occupier, speaking of it, mentioned that it was all wheat that year except one corner. To a question as to the size of the corner, it transpired that it was 50 acres, and growing peas. For comparison there is a story of a Devonshire farmer who said he had been very busy one winter making four fields into one. "Then you've got a big field," said a friend. "Yes," was the reply; "it's just four acres."

When the farm labourer was enfranchised in 1885 he became an important member of the electorate. Candidates and canvassers alike had a much more strenuous time than ever before, the former were constrained to hold meetings in every village, and the latter were obliged to visit nearly every cottage. The late Sir Richard Temple after a distinguished career in India, became Conservative candidate for our division. The doctrine of "three acres and a cow," in opposition to every tenet of rural economy, as well as the division of the land among the labourers, were at the time paraded by theorists and paid agitators, as bribes to purchase the votes of the new electors, and as ensuring the salvation of the rural population, which was then beginning to suffer from unemployment, resulting from the destruction of corn-growing by foreign competition.

The more credulous of the labourers were excited and unsettled by the alluring prospect of independence thus held out to them, and it was reported that some went so far as to survey the fields around their villages and select the plots they proposed to cultivate, and that others took baskets to the poll in which to bring home the all-powerful magic of the mysterious vote! Among the new voters in a neighbouring village, a man of very decided views found it puzzling to decide by which candidate they were most nearly represented, and, determined to make no mistake at the poll, he consulted a fellow-labourer, inquiring: "Which way be the big uns a-going, because I be agin they?"

The Squire of an adjoining parish met an old villager with whom he had always been on good terms; after mutual greetings, the man sympathized: "I *be* sorry for you, Squire." "Why?" was the rejoinder. "Yes, I be regular sorry for you, Squire, that I be." "What's the matter?" asked the Squire. "Ay! about this here land; 'tis to be divided amongst we working men." "Indeed," said the Squire; "but look here, after a bit, some of you won't want to cultivate it any longer, and some, with improvident habits, will sell their plots to others, so that soon it will be all back again into the hands of a few; what will you do then?" The man looked puzzled, scratched his head, and cogitated deeply, until a simple solution presented itself: "Then, Squire," said he, "we shall divide again!"

Sir Richard Temple was undoubtedly an able man, but he was a complete stranger to the local conditions of the constituency. The villagers of Badsey especially, as well as of other adjoining parishes, were just beginning to retrieve their position, threatened by the collapse of corn-growing and consequent unemployment, by the adoption of market-gardening and fruit-growing. The land, run down and full of weeds and rubbish, had been cut up into allotments and offered to them as tenants, their only choice lying between years of hard work in redeeming its condition or emigration. Many young men chose the latter, and did well in the States of America; but where there was a wife and young children that course was scarcely possible, and the man became an allotment tenant. Passing one of these on a plot full of "squitch," which he was laboriously breaking up with a fork to expose it in big clods to a baking sun, I asked if he had taken it. "Well," said he, "I don't know whether I've taken *it* or it's taken *me!*"

These men, by unceasing labour and self-denial, were just beginning to turn the corner; they had cleaned the land, ameliorated its mechanical condition by application of soot and by deep digging with their beloved forks, and, having discovered how wonderfully asparagus flourished on this deep, rich soil, had planted large areas, as well as plum-trees and other market-garden crops, and the well-merited return was coming in increasingly year by year.

Sir Richard Temple did not understand the difference between the small holder, growing corn and ordinary crops in less favoured parts of the country, on the one hand, and market-gardeners in the Vale of Evesham, with its early climate, splendid soil, and railway connection with huge artisan populations, delivering the produce with punctuality and despatch, on the other. He considered that small holders could not make an economic success where the farmers had failed, and had made his views well known in the constituency, but he did not distinguish between the small holder and the market-gardener.

The men of Badsey felt aggrieved, they knew better, and at a meeting he held in the village they gave him a rather noisy hearing, with interruptions such as, "Keep off them steel farks," "Mind them steel farks, Sir Richard," and so on.

Sir Richard came to ask for my support and assistance in our village, and, as I was not at home, my wife entertained him in my absence, with tea and wedding-cake. She innocently asked if he had come to canvass me; her straightforward query surprised him, but, after a moment's hesitation, he replied cautiously: "Well, something of that sort."

He was eventually returned, and the men of Badsey continued to flourish on asparagus-growing in spite of his warnings; new houses sprang up in every direction, and available labour grew scarcer and scarcer. Those splendid asparagus "sticks" or "buds," as they are called, tied with osier or withy twigs, which may be seen in Covent Garden Market and the large fruiterers' shops in Regent Street, are grown in and around the parishes of Badsey and Aldington. They command high prices, up to 15s. and 20s. a hundred for special stuff, and this year (1919) I see that £21 was realized for the champion hundred at the Badsey Asparagus Show. That, of course, must be regarded as quite exceptional, and possibly there were special considerations which made it worth the money to the purchaser.

Later came difficulties; after successive dry summers the asparagus was attacked by a fungoid complaint, called by the growers "rust." Instead of growing vigorously after the crop had been gathered—which is the time when the buds for next year's crop are developing on the crowns of the plants—and finally dying off naturally in beautiful feathery plumes of green and gold, it presented a dingy and rusty appearance, eventually turning black. Asparagus cannot stand long-continued summer and autumn drought; it likes plenty of moisture, in free circulation but not stagnant. The crops that followed the appearance I have described were very deficient, proving that the growing season of one year's foliage is the time when next year's crop is decided.

The growth of asparagus is still a very important part of the market-gardener's business in the parishes referred to, but it does not continue to produce the best results indefinitely and continuously on the same land, and the growers have been obliged to extend their acreages and take fresh plots. I have little doubt that with the scientific application of artificial fertilizers the yield would continue satisfactory for a much longer period. Plant disease of any kind is nearly always due to starvation for want of the chemical constituents upon which the crop feeds, though sometimes caused by unhealthy sap, the result of late spring frosts or unsuitable weather.

The asparagus-growers relied too much upon soot as a fertilizer; it has a marvellous effect upon the mechanical condition of heavy land; its particles intervene between the particles of the almost impalpable powder of which clay is composed, and the soil approximates to a well-tilled garden plot after a few applications and careful incorporation, and in the local phraseology, it becomes "all of a myrtle." But as plant food soot contains nitrogen only, a great plant stimulant, which quickly exhausts the soil of the other necessary constituents. If the growers would make use of basic slag, superphosphate, or bone dust to replace the phosphate of lime removed by the crop, and of potash in one of its available forms, they would soon experience a great improvement in the power of their asparagus to resist disease and deterioration.

I am aware that some of the smaller growers regard all kinds of artificial fertilizers with suspicion, but they may be interested, should they ever read these pages, in the following story. When Peruvian guano was first introduced into this country, the farmers could not be persuaded that it merited any reliance as a manure. The importers, in despair, caused some of the despised stuff to be sown in the form of huge letters spelling the word "FOOLS" upon a bare hillside, visible from a great distance. The following spring, with the beginning of growth, and throughout the summer, the word stared the farmers in the face whenever they chanced to look that way, in dark green outstanding characters upon the yellow background; after this practical demonstration there was no difficulty in finding purchasers.

Sir Richard Temple was opposed by Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, one at least of whose canvassers was not above stretching a point to obtain the votes of the labourers. My men told me that they had been promised roast beef and plum pudding every day of their lives should the Liberal party be returned. These tactics were again resorted to in the election of 1906, when walls were placarded with pictures of the Chinese employed in the goldmines of the Transvaal, driven in chains by cruel overseers, presumably representing the Conservative Government which had sanctioned their employment. I know from what I heard in my new home, for I was no longer at Aldington, that this misrepresentation decided the votes of many of the more ignorant voters.

CHAPTER VIII

MY THREE VICARS—CHURCH RESTORATION—CHURCHWARDEN EXPERIENCES—CLERICAL AND OTHER STORIES

> "Where many a generation's prayer,
> Hath perfumed and hath blessed the air."
>
> GLADSTONE.

I SAW a good deal of my three successive Vicars, for I was Vicar's churchwarden for a period of nearly twenty years, and was treasurer of the fund for the restoration and enlargement of Badsey Church. My first Vicar had held the living for over thirty years when we decided upon this important undertaking; and not wishing to be burdened with the correspondence which the work would entail, he invited me to act for him. I was pleased, because I have always been interested in the architecture of old buildings, especially churches, and readily undertook the post. I had the constant and intimate co-operation of my co-warden, Mr. Julius Sladden, of Badsey, and I may say that no two people ever worked together with greater harmony.

The restoration had been debated for many years; the ancient church was sadly dilapidated, and disfigured by an ugly gallery at the west end of the nave, which obscured the finest arch in the building, leading into the tower; and the incident which brought the matter within the range of possibility was romantic. The Vicar succeeded quite unexpectedly to a large inheritance; the news reached him and his wife, who was away from home at the time, simultaneously. The letters they wrote to each other on their good fortune crossed in the post, and characteristically each wrote "Badsey Church must now be restored." Soon afterwards the Vicar came to my house and, sitting down at my table, wrote me a cheque for £500 to start the fund.

On the advice of the patrons of the living—the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Oxford—we invited Mr. Thomas Graham Jackson, now Sir Thomas Graham Jackson, R.A., to undertake the duties of architect. His work was well known at Oxford at the time, as the beautiful New Schools had just been completed from his designs; we were also most fortunate in obtaining the services of Mr. Thomas Collins, of Tewkesbury, as builder. Mr. Collins was devoted to church architecture, and the financial consideration of such work was to him quite secondary to the pleasure he experienced as a connoisseur in restoring to the dignity and beauty of the past any ecclesiastical building of distinguished interest. The first estimate was, I think, £1,500, exclusive of architect's fees, but when the work was completed we had expended in all a sum of over £2,130. We did not finally clear off the debt until 1894, nine years after the reopening of the church, and since then a considerable further sum has been expended in rehanging the old bells and adding two new ones to make up the full peal of eight.

It was delightful to experience the willingness of everybody to help; subscriptions, large and small, came in readily at the very outset, and this part of the work never became arduous until the last few hundreds had to be raised. Most of us experienced the truth of the proverb *Bis dat qui cito dat*, but in a different sense from that which usually commends it, for many who gave quickly not only literally gave twice, but three times or more. Bazaars, concerts, and entertainments of all kinds were undertaken by the parishioners, a sum of £376 being raised by these means. Among them a bazaar at Badsey realized £130; another, later, at Aldington in one of my old barns, £80; and two concerts—afternoon and evening—at Malvern, organized by my wife and her sister, Miss Poulton, £100.

The Vicar received a notable letter from the late Lord Salisbury, the Premier; they had been at Eton and Christ

Church together, and Lord Salisbury was godfather to the Vicar's eldest son. The Vicar had written of the fortune he had inherited, and spoke of some rooks as having brought the luck by building, for the first time, in an elm-tree in the vicarage grounds. Lord Salisbury, in sending a donation of £25 to the restoration fund, added: "I see a great many rooks building near my house" (Hatfield), "but the luck has not come to me yet." The Vicar's comment to me was: "If the luck has not yet come to Lord Salisbury, I don't see how anyone can hope for it!"

The Malvern concert was a strenuous undertaking; Badsey being a long way from Malvern, it was necessary to interest the inhabitants and to some extent to plead *in forma pauperis*, for we were really a poor parish without any large resident landowners. The first thing was to get a good list of influential local patrons; and as soon as Lady Emily Foley consented, the promoters felt that the work was half done. Lady Emily Foley was supreme at Malvern, a very distinguished old lady and most popular, but perhaps a little alarming.

On the day of the two concerts I was detailed with a troop of young men, relatives of the patrons, to conduct the people to their seats, and an elaborate plan of the large Assembly Room was given me, with minute particulars of the lettered rows and numbered seats, presenting the appearance, somewhat, of a labyrinth. I was studying it at the doors, and arranging with the young stewards as to their individual functions, when I heard an alarmed exclamation from one of them: "Look out! here comes Lady Emily Foley!" In an instant the whole crowd took to their heels and disappeared down the corridor. With some little difficulty I succeeded in finding the seats of Lady Emily Foley's party, but I could see that she regarded me as a rather feeble cicerone.

She was, however, exceedingly gracious after my wife's first solo, which pleased her so much that we had to make an exception in this case, and allow an encore by her special request, though it had been arranged, owing to the length of the programme, that no encores were to be given. Lady Alwyne Compton, wife of the Dean of Worcester, very kindly assisted as a performer, my wife having frequently sung at charity concerts and entertainments for her in Worcester and the neighbourhood, among them a recital by Mr. Brandram of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, when she undertook the soprano solos occurring in the play, at the Worcester Guildhall. Lady Alwyne Compton was very musical, and rehearsals were held in the stone-vaulted crypt beneath the Deanery, a place of splendid acoustic properties, which intensified the sound without coarsening it, and brought the voice back to the singer in a way unknown on the usual platform, decorated with screens, curtains, and flags, and obstructed by floral impedimenta.

Among the performers at the Malvern concerts some professionals had been engaged from London, including Miss Margaret Wild, a well-known pianist. I had given my men a holiday for the occasion, and was anxious to hear their opinion of the performances. They considered the music rather too high class for them, but they thoroughly appreciated the nimble fingers of Miss Margaret Wild; one of them adding enthusiastically: "My word, her did make 'im (the piano) rottle!" Our old parish clerk too, at the time over eighty years of age, who walked three miles to Evesham Station in the morning, ascended the Worcestershire Beacon—nearly 1,500 feet—and finally walked back from Evesham to Badsey at night, was much struck by the recitations of Miss Isabel Bateman at the concert. The dear old man was somewhat deaf, and told me that, sitting towards the back of the room, "I couldn't hear nothing, but I could see as the gesters [gestures] was all right."

This old clerk was prominently devout in the church responses, and had some original pronunciations of unusual words; in the Nicene Creed he generally followed a few bars, so to speak, behind the Vicar, but one never failed to catch the words "apost'lick church" towards the end. He was very scornful of ghosts, and told me that he had been about the churchyard very often at night for fifty years without seeing anything like an apparition. But the whole village was alarmed, including the clerk, one Sunday when, about midnight, the tenor bell was heard solemnly tolling. The clerk, with some supporters and a lantern, unlocked the door, and found the village idiot—silly C.—in the tower ringing the bell. It appeared that, after service, the clerk had extinguished the lights and locked up for the night about eight o'clock. C., who had gone to sleep in the gallery with his head upon his arms before him on the desk, slumbered on until he woke in alarm some four hours later, to find himself alone and the church in total darkness, but he was intelligent enough to remember the bell and get his release.

C. had a hand-to-hand fight in the church tower with Aldington's special imbecile. After service the clerk invited me to the scene of the battle, pointing out some crimson traces on the stone pavement. I called upon our imbecile's parents on my way home, and the old father was greatly shocked. "Here he be, sir," he said; "I hope you'll give him a jolly good hiding." I told him I could hardly undertake the rôle of executioner on a Sunday, in cold blood, and contented myself with a severe reprimand.

I was handing the collecting-bag one morning after service, and finding it did not return from the end of the row of chairs as quickly as usual, I discovered this same individual with his hand *in the bag*. I signed to him impatiently to pass it back. After service he came to the vestry and said that he had contributed a florin in mistake for a penny, and was trying to retrieve it. I could generally estimate pretty accurately the amount of the collection, as I handed the bag, knowing the extent of each person's usual gift, and sure enough, there was an extra florin among the coins, with which I sent him away happy.

The parish must have been an uncivilized place in former times; there was an accusing record beneath the west window of the tower, in the shape of a blocked up entrance. I was told that the ringers, not wishing to enter or leave the tower through the church door during service, and also to facilitate the smuggling in of unlimited cider had, after strenuous efforts, cut an opening through the ancient wall and base some feet in thickness, and that the achievement was announced to the village by uproarious cheering when at last they succeeded. A door was afterwards fitted to the aperture, but the entrance was abolished later by a more reverent Vicar.

The belfry was decorated with various bones of legs of mutton and of joints of beef, hung up to commemorate notable weddings of prominent parishioners—perhaps, too, as a hint to future aspirants to the state of matrimony —when the ringers had enjoyed a substantial meal and gallons of cider at the expense of the bridegroom. There seems to have been a traditional connection between church bell-ringing and thirst, for Gilbert White relates that when the bells of Selborne Church were recast and a new one presented in 1735, " The day of the arrival of this tuneable peal was observed as an high festival by the village, and rendered more joyous by an order from the donor that the treble bell should be fixed bottom upward in the ground and filled with punch, of which all present were permitted to partake."

The Vicar of Badsey told me that at the neighbouring church of Wickhamford, then also in his jurisdiction, that when he first came, in the early fifties, it was customary, as the men entered the church by the chancel door, to pitch their hats in a heap on the altar. Also that on his home-coming with his bride, he was, the same evening, requisitioned to put a stop to a fight between two drunken reprobates outside the vicarage gate. Badsey people can in these modern times point with pride to a much higher standard of civilization, and they fully recognize that " 'Eave 'alf a brick at his 'ead, Bill," is a method of welcome to a stranger not considered precisely etiquette at the present day.

There was no vestry before the restoration of Badsey Church; the Vicar's surplice might be seen hanging over the side of one of the square pews which obstructed the chancel, and when the Vicar appeared he was followed by the clerk, who assisted at the public ceremony of robing. Church decorations at Christmas consisted at that time of sprigs of holly stuck upright in holes bored along the tops of the pew partitions at regular intervals, and at the harvest thanksgiving an historic miniature rick of corn annually made its appearance on the altar. In those days, however, flowers, which are scarcely suitable for a festival where the decorations should proclaim the abundance of the matured season of growth, by corn and fruit, were not included. I have seen too many of these, to the exclusion of corn, in modern town churches, and even wild oats, which, though very pretty, are not exactly typical of thanksgiving.

It is surprising how much damage may be done to valuable old woodwork by an enthusiastic band of decorators, assisted by an indiscriminating curate, and how inharmonious may be the general effect of individual labours—though charming taken separately—where a comprehensive scheme is neglected. I have counted fourteen differing reds—not tones or shades of the same colour—including the hood of the officiating clergyman, in one chancel at the same time, bewildering to the eye and distracting to the mind. And I once saw a beautiful and priceless old Elizabethan table in a vestry, covered with a mouldy piece of purple velvet secured with tin-tacks driven into the tortured oak. There are, or were, two lovely old Chippendale chairs with the characteristic backs and legs inside the altar-rails of Badsey Church; they are valuable and no doubt duly appreciated, not only for their own sake, but because they were the gift of dear old Barnard, the clerk, who spent fifty years of his life in the service of the church.

I once heard a curate preaching to an agricultural congregation at a harvest thanksgiving after a disastrous season, when the earth had not yielded much by way of increase, remarking that in such a time of scarcity we might be thankful that plenty of foreign corn would be available; good theology, perhaps, but scarcely expedient under the circumstances.

We found Sir Thomas Graham Jackson a purist in the matter of church restoration, and in my capacity as churchwarden and treasurer, I was fortunate in having to confer with a man of such pre-eminent good taste. He would not allow some new oak panels, with which we had to supplement the old linen-pattern panels of the pulpit, to be coloured to match the old work. "Time," he said, "will bring them all together." Possibly the lapse of two hundred years may do so, but I saw at once that he was right in the principle that no sham should be tolerated in honest work, more especially in a sacred building. We objected also to a new chimney which surmounted the junction of the nave and choir exteriorly: it seemed to smack of domestic detail; but here again he satisfied us by saying that, as heating the building was a modern necessity, there was no reason to be ashamed of such an indispensable addition. As a matter of fact, this chimney long ago became nicely toned down by its native soot, and is practically unnoticeable.

There is much American oak, I believe, now used in new churches and public buildings; it appears to resemble chestnut much more than English oak, and I doubt whether it will ever acquire the beautiful tone which time confers upon the latter. It should, however, be recognized that much of the depth of colour of old oak panelling is really nothing but dirt, though the true dark brown tint of old age can be found underneath, and right to the centre of each piece. Spring-cleaning of the past consisted very much in polishing with beeswax and turpentine, without removing the dirt produced by smoky fires and constant handling, so that extraneous matter became coated with the polish and preserved beneath it. I have had occasion, when restoring old woodwork, to wash off this outside accretion, and when removed, the tone of the wood remained still dark, though lighter than before it lost its black and somewhat sticky appearance.

The fakers of sham old furniture produce the intense darkness by stains of various kinds. I once found myself at an inn in Devonshire which contained a quantity of "delft" and "antique oak" furniture for sale. While the attendant was bringing me some refreshment, I tested the genuineness of the oak by a small chip with my pocket-knife, and, as I anticipated, found perfectly white wood under the surface, and, I believe, American oak. The irony of the transaction is striking; here was a piece of wood imported from the States only a few months before, converted in this country into Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Stuart furniture, and then, it may be, bought by American visitors and taken back to their own country.

Some years before the church restoration could be taken in hand, a piece of land, bordering the west side of the churchyard, and between it and the highroad, and another similar piece on the east side of the churchyard, were offered for sale by auction. They belonged to the old Badsey Manor property and of course occupied important positions lying in each case just between the churchyard and the adjoining roads. An individual who had fallen out with the Vicar announced his intention of purchasing these pieces and building cottages and a public-house upon them, presumably "to spite the parson."

The Vicar at once saw the absolute necessity of acquiring the land for the church and enclosing it with suitable walls, as an addition to the churchyard. It would have been a terrible eyesore from the village street if ugly brick and blue-slated buildings were erected in front of the beautiful old grey church, and the idea of an inn in such a place was intolerable. He consulted the patrons of the living, who agreed to help, and simultaneously a good old aunt gave him leave to bid up to a certain sum on her behalf as a gift to the parish.

The patrons sent a representative to the sale with an undisclosed price, at which he was empowered to make the purchase. Absolute secrecy was preserved, and, except the Vicar, no one knew the man or whom he represented; he was to leave the train from Oxford at Honeybourne Station so as not even to come through Evesham to Badsey. The Vicar had arranged that the patrons' representative should also bid on behalf of the aunt, but did not disclose the limit. The man was not to bid until the Vicar himself stopped, and he was to go on bidding until the Vicar removed a rose from his button-hole, which would signify that the aunt's limit was reached. Whether the patrons' representative could go any further or not, the Vicar did not know.

Before the auction the two did not meet, and they sat apart during the proceedings. The village malcontent was in great form, making certain of success, and was delighted when the Vicar apparently gave up bidding as if beaten. The rose was still in his button-hole, but before long the aunt's limit was reached, and it had to be removed; he was however relieved to find that the patrons' representative continued to bid. His opponent was getting very fidgety as the price rose, hesitating for some moments every time the bidding was against him. Just as the hammer was about to fall he would arrest it with, " Try 'im again," but the stranger instantly capped his reluctant bid, always leaving him to consider a further advance in great discomfort. At last in despair but quite certain that the Vicar at any rate was knocked out he gave up, exclaiming, " 'E med 'ave it, 'e med 'ave it "; and the hammer fell. All eyes were fixed upon the unknown bidder, and the auctioneer demanded "the name of the buyer"; very quietly came the announcement, " The Dean and Chapter of Christ Church." Horribly disgusted the malcontent fired a parting shot as he reached the door: " If I'd a-knowed the pairson was a goin' to 'ave it, I'd a made 'im pay a pretty penny more nor that."

This Vicar was a very impressive reader, especially of dramatic stories from the Old Testament. As he read the account of the discomfiture of the priests of Baal by the Prophet Elijah one could visualize the scene. Elijah's dripping sacrifice blazing to the skies, the priests of Baal, mutilated by their own knives and lancets, in vain imploring their god to send the fire to vindicate himself. The heavens were black, and one could hear the rush of Ahab's chariot, the roar of the thunder and the hissing torrent of rain, and see the prophet running swiftly before him. The Vicar, however, was not an actor like a clergyman I was told of, who got so excited over Agag and his delicate approach to Samuel that he could not resist an illustration to intensify the action by taking a mincing step or two aside from the lectern.

No village is complete without its curmudgeon or self-appointed grumbler, just as every village has its special imbecile. The curmudgeon originates in a class above the idiot; very often he is an ex-churchwarden, guardian, way-warden, or other official, who has resigned in dudgeon or been ousted from his post for some neglect or failure. He is a man with whom the world has gone wrong, a sufferer, perhaps, from some disaster which has become an obsession. He views everything with distorted eyesight; nothing pleases him, and he wants to put everybody right. He cherishes a perpetual grievance against some individual or clique for a fancied slight, and goes about trying to stir up ill-feeling among the ignorant by malicious insinuations. In former times he was an adept at "parson-baiting" at the annual Easter vestry meeting, when he would air his grievance against the Vicar of the parish or any person in authority.

At these vestries the Vicar is wise if he declares the curmudgeon to be "out of order," and declines to hear him, for, legally, the business does not include any matter which does not appear upon the notice convening the meeting, signed by the Vicar and churchwardens. This usually announces that churchwardens will be elected and the accounts produced; the latter, since church rates were abolished, is not obligatory, and only subscribers have a right to question them. The proceedings are not legal unless three *full* days have elapsed since the publication of the notice on a Sunday before morning service, the following Thursday being thus the earliest day on which the meeting can take place. It is important to remember that no churchwarden has a legal status before he has been formally admitted by the Archdeacon.

In former times, before the creation of Parish, District and County Councils, the curmudgeon, after the reaction of the winter months, became very prominent towards the time of the Easter vestry, when he would appear, having enlisted a small band of supporters, with a number of grievances relating to rates, parish officials, rights of way, footpaths, and such-like debatable subjects. Of course, he should have been promptly squashed by the chairman, but too often an indulgent Vicar would allow him to have his fling.

Now, however, the curmudgeon can easily get himself elected upon one of the numerous councils; having mismanaged his own affairs until he has none left to manage, he appears to regard himself as a fit and proper person to mismanage the business of other people, and the brief authority which his position confers gives him a welcome opportunity of letting off superfluous steam.

Parishioners sometimes combined and elected an unpopular person to a troublesome post which nobody wanted. Such was the office of way-warden, under whose jurisdiction came the management and repair of parish roads, superintending and paying the roadmen, and keeping the necessary records and accounts. A market-gardener, a canny Scot, who had fallen into disfavour, had this office thrust upon him much against his will. Once elected, the victim had no choice in the matter, and, being a very busy man, he was thoroughly annoyed. He soon discovered a weapon wherewith to avenge the wrong—one which his opponents had put into his hands themselves; during his year of office he restricted the road repairs to a lane adjoining his own land, leading to the railway-station, which his carts traversed many times daily. He gave it a thorough good coat of stones, and all the available labour, as well as the cash chargeable on the rates of the parish, was in this way expended, chiefly for his own benefit, though the parish shared to the extent of the use they made of this particular piece of road. Great was the outcry, but nothing could be done till the year of office expired, and, naturally, he was never elected again.

The purchase of the land adjoining the churchyard had a remarkable sequel; it was conveyed to the Vicar and churchwardens for the time being, these original churchwardens having been long out of the office before my appointment. After the restoration of the church my co-warden and I, with the Vicar's consent, levelled the rough places in the neglected churchyard, sowed it with grass seeds, and planted various ornamental shrubs; we had the untidy southern boundary carefully dug over, and set a man to plant a yew-hedge. He was thus employed when a parishioner appeared in some excitement, and objected to the planting of yew on account of possible damage to sheep grazing in the churchyard, claiming the right—which, as a matter of fact, belonged to the Vicar alone, though never exercised—to such grazing, jointly with the Vicar. He proceeded to pull up some of the young yews as a protest, and threw them uprooted on the ground. The man employed reported the matter to my co-warden, living near, who was very soon at my house.

We decided to prosecute the offender, and obtained the Vicar's consent, he being the legal prosecutor. The case was heard by a bench of magistrates composed entirely of clergy and churchwarden squires, who naturally sympathized with us, and, quite logically, convicted the defendant in a fine, I think, of about 25s. and costs, or a term in Worcester Gaol in default. The defendant refused to pay a farthing and was removed in custody; but later our dear old Vicar, very generously, came forward and paid the amount himself.

Shortly before the church restoration I had a notice to attend an archidiaconal visitation, and duly appeared at the church at the time arranged. The Archdeacon made a careful inspection of the fabric and property of the church, not too well pleased with its dilapidated appearance. Nothing much was said till we reached the fourteenth-century font, showing signs of long use. The Archdeacon motioned to the clerk to remove the oak cover, and the old man, with the air of an officious waiter, lifted it with a flourish, disclosing, inside the cracked font, a white pudding-basin, inside which, again, reposed a species of beetle known as a "devil's coach-horse." The Archdeacon, peering in and evidently recognizing the insect and its popular designation, and looking much shocked, exclaimed with some warmth: "Dear me! I should scarcely have expected to find *that* thing in a font!"

This story reminds me of a similar visitation depicted in *Punch.* The Archdeacon was seen at the lych-gate of a country church in company with a churchwarden farmer, the Vicar being unable to attend. The contrast was well delineated—the Archdeacon tall, thin, and ascetic, in a long black coat and archidiaconal hat; and the farmer of the John Bull type, in ample breeches and gaiters. The churchyard presented a magnificent crop of exuberant wheat:

Archdeacon. I don't like this at all; I shall really have to speak to the Vicar about it.

Churchwarden (*thinking of the rotation of crops*). Just what I told un, sir—just what I told 'un. "You keeps on a-wheating of it and a-wheating of it," I says; "why don't you tater it?" says I.

At Badsey objections were soon heard to the innovation of the surpliced choir and improved music in the restored church; one old villager, living close by, expressed himself as follows concerning the entry of the Vicar and choir, in procession, from the new vestry: "They come in with them boys all dressed up like a lot of little parsons, and the parson behind 'em just like the old Pope hisself. But there ain't no call for me to go to church now, for I can set at home and hear 'em a baarlin' [noise like a calf] and a harmenin [amening] in me own house."

On a similar occasion, in another parish where more elaborate music had been introduced, an old coachman, given to much devotional musical energy, told me as a sore grievance: "You know, sir, I'd used to like singin' a bit myself, but now, as soon as I've worked myself up to a tidy old pitch, all of a sudden *they* leaves off, and I be left a bawlin' !"

Among various special weekday services I remember a Confirmation when an elderly Aldington parishioner had courageously decided to participate in the rite. She was missing from the ceremony, and told my wife afterwards, in answer to inquiries, that a bad headache had prevented her from attending, adding: "But there, you can't stand agin your 'ead !"

I was at the house of a neighbouring Vicar where the Bishop of the diocese had been lunching shortly before, when there was a dish of very fine oranges on the table and another of Blenheim orange apples. The Bishop was offered a Blenheim orange by the Vicar, who remarked that they came from his own garden. The Bishop had probably never heard of a Blenheim orange, and the latter word directed his attention to the dish of oranges. He examined them with great surprise, and exclaimed: "Dear me ! I had no idea that oranges would come to such perfection out of doors in this climate."

A capital story was told by a Bishop of Worcester, in connection with the efforts of the Church in that part of the country to alleviate the lot of the hop-pickers, who flock into Worcestershire in September by the thousand. One of the mission workers, who had gone down to the hop-yards, met a dilapidated individual in a country lane, who said he was "a picker." Pressed for further particulars, the man responded: "In the summer I picks peas and fruit; when autumn comes I picks hops; in the winter I picks pockets; and when I'm caught I picks oakum. I'm kept nice and warm during the cold months, and when the fine days come round once more I starts pea-picking again."

My second Vicar was a scholar, an excellent preacher of very condensed sermons; he conducted the services with great dignity, but his manner to the villagers was a little alarming. He found the old clerk somewhat officious, I think. One evening, after service, when some strangers from Evesham attended—for Badsey was a pleasant walk on a summer evening—the clerk announced to the Vicar, with great jubilation, that "the gentleman with the party from Evesham expressed himself as very well satisfied with the service." No doubt the clerk had received a practical proof of the satisfaction. The clerk imagined, I believe, that he was as much responsible for the conduct of the services as the Vicar, and thought the latter would be equally pleased with the stranger's commendation. He was disappointed, I fear, for the Vicar did not seem in the least impressed, showing, too, some annoyance at what doubtless appeared to him great presumption.

At the time of the Boer War, followed by the Boxers' revolt in China and the Siege of Peking, when telegrams were exhibited in the post-office every Sunday morning, I saw one day, on my way to church, that Peking had been relieved. The Vicar—my third—preached on the subject of the terrors of the siege—his sermon having been written on the previous day—and drew a harrowing picture of the fate of the defenders. After service I asked if he had not seen the telegram, and told him the good news. "Good gracious!" said he; "I *am* glad I didn't know that before the service; what *should* I have done about my sermon?" I was a little surprised that the delivery of a sermon which was no longer to the point should appear more important than the announcement of the happy event; but perhaps the position would have been somewhat undignified had he been obliged to explain, and dismiss the congregation with apologies.

An elderly Vicar, in a parish in the adjoining county, Gloucestershire, found the morning service with a sermon very fatiguing, and the patron, the Squire, suggested that the ante-Communion service would be less tiring in place of the latter. He was not a very interesting preacher, and the Squire was quite as well pleased as the Vicar when he agreed. There was never a sermon at the morning service thereafter.

Other denominations besides the Church, of course, existed in the parish and neighbourhood; we did not hear much about them, but the following story was related as occurring in a neighbouring village. To see the point it is necessary to introduce the actors; they consisted of Daniel S. and Jim H., rival hedgers in the art of "pleaching," of which Joseph Arch was such a notable exponent. Daniel had lately been employed upon a job of this kind for a farmer, Mr. (locally Master) R. The scene was the room that did duty for a chapel in the village.

Daniel S. advanced to the reading-desk, and, turning over the leaves of the Bible to find the Book of Daniel, announced sententiously: "Let's see what Dannel done in his dai [day]." Up jumped Jim H. at the back of the room: "Oh, I can tell tha [thee] what Dannel done in his dai—cut a yedge [hedge] for Master R., and took whome all the best of the 'ood [wood]!"

A story was current too—nearer home this time—of a grand fête given to the children. They marched in procession from one village to another, in which the tea was to take place, under the leadership of an ancient parishioner. Of this person it was said that he had violated every article of the Decalogue, and that had the number been twenty instead of ten he would have treated them with equal indifference! As the children entered the second village with beaming faces and banners waving, as he gave the word of command, they sang in sweet trebles and in perfect innocence, "See the mighty host advancing, Satan leading on!"

CHAPTER IX

THE SCHOOL BOARD—RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION—SCHOOL INSPECTIONS—DEAN FARRAR—COMPULSORY EDUCATION

> "Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;
> Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."
>
> COWPER.

WHEN I came to Aldington I found that by the energy of the Vicar an elementary school had been built and equipped, and was working well under the voluntary system. I accepted the post of treasurer at his invitation, but as time went on financial difficulties arose, as the Education Department increased their requirements. The large farmers were being gradually ruined by foreign competition, and the small market-gardeners, in occupation of the land as it fell vacant, could not be induced to subscribe, although their own children were the sole beneficiaries. A voluntary rate was suggested, but met with no general response, one old parishioner announcing that she didn't intend "to pay no voluntary rate until she was obliged"!

Matters were getting desperate when Vicar No. 2 arrived, and it soon became evident that the voluntary system had completely broken down. A School Board was the only alternative, and, as all the old managers refused to become members and no one else would undertake the responsibility, a deadlock ensued. We were threatened by the Education Department that, failing a Board of parishioners, they would appoint for the post any outsiders, non-ratepayers, who could be induced to volunteer. The prospect was not a pleasant one, and on the invitation of a deputation of working men, I agreed to stand (chiefly, perhaps, in my own interests, as the largest ratepayer in the parish, with the exception of the

Great Western Railway Company), and others eventually came forward.

The Board was constituted, and we were rather a three-cornered lot: my co-warden; a boot and shoemaker in Evesham, with land in Badsey; a carpenter and small builder; three small market-gardeners and myself. I was elected chairman, and we obtained the services of an excellent clerk, who held the same office for the Evesham Board of Guardians—a capable man, and well up in the forms and idiosyncrasies of the Board of Education. Our designation was "the United District School Board of Badsey, Aldington, and Wickhamford." It was not easy to discover the qualifications of all the members from an educational point of view; some at least represented the village malcontent section, now getting rather nervous as to School Board rates. And there was a talkative section who illustrated the truth of the old proverb, "It is not the loudest cackling hen that lays the biggest egg," and of, perhaps, the still more expressive, "It's the worst wheel of the waggon that makes the most noise." One, at any rate, was definitely qualified—"He knowed summat about draining!" The majority were conspicuous as economists in the matter of probable school expenditure, and it appeared later that two, if not three, of the members were unable to write their own names, so that sometimes we could not get the necessary number of signatures to the cheques, when some of the more efficient members happened to be absent.

Early in our existence as a United Board, one of the economists made a little speech in which he propounded the theory that "our first duty is to the ratepayers"; but I could not help suggesting that, as a legally appointed body, we were bound to obey the law beyond all other considerations, and corrected his dictum, with all respect, by substituting that "our first duty is to the children." I must do him the justice to say that he accepted my suggestion in a complimentary manner.

It soon became evident that it is not always desirable to belong to a parish grouped with others under a United District School Board. Aldington possessed the largest rateable value with the lowest population, which was about equal to Wickhamford with the lowest rateable value; and Badsey, with by far the largest population, came between Aldington and Wickhamford as to rateable value—the obvious result being that Aldington was called upon to pay an excessive and unfair share of the cost of educating Badsey's children. We did not, however, want a school in our quiet village; it is something to get rid of children when inclined to be noisy, so we did not grumble at a little extra expense.

We carried on the school at first in the old building, but very soon the Department began to press for a larger and better-equipped establishment. Many of their requirements we considered unnecessary in a country village, and put off the evil day as long as possible, with such phrases as, "The matter is under consideration," or, "Will shortly be brought to the notice of the Board." Like "retribution," however, the Education Department, "though leaden-footed, comes iron-handed," and when all other methods failed they always put forward as a final inducement to comply with their demands the threat of withholding the Government grant; so that, in spite of the shoemaker's encomium, that "Our chairman has plenty of com*bat*iveness," we had eventually to give way.

At the outset it was decided to admit the Press; our meetings were generally expected to afford some spicy copy for readers of the local papers, but I am pleased to think that both reporters and readers were disappointed. Some of our neighbours had given us specially lively specimens of the personalities indulged in at the meetings of their local bodies, Boards of Guardians, and Councils—notably, at that time, those of Winchcombe and Stow-on-the-Wold, where these exhibitions appeared to form a favourite diversion. It is a mistake for such a Board as ours to admit reporters; the noisy members are apt to monopolize the speaking, to the exclusion of the more useful and more thoughtful; the former play to the gallery to the extent of visibly addressing themselves to the reporters instead of to the chairman, as is proper.

The first point we had to consider was the acquisition of a suitable site for the new buildings, the old site not affording space to enlarge the premises or for the addition of a master's house. We were lucky to get the offer of an excellent position, allowing not only space for all the buildings in contemplation, but ample room for future enlargements, which it was evident would be needed before many more years. I was requested, with another member, to interview the vendor's solicitors, and we were empowered to make the best bargain we could arrange for the site.

We concluded the purchase, and congratulated ourselves upon the acquisition of a central and in every way desirable site, with a long road frontage, for the very moderate sum of, I think, £90. On reporting to the Board at our next meeting, the sum appeared large to some of the more simple members, and they were inclined to be dissatisfied, until I told them that I was prepared to appropriate the bargain myself, and they could find another for the school. This settled the matter, and, I suppose, at the present time the site would fetch two or three times what it cost us.

Plans and specifications were now necessary, and from inquiries I had made I was able to suggest an architect with much experience in school buildings. He appeared before the Board later, and was subjected to many questions from the members, of which I only remember one that appealed to me as original: "Do you pose before this Board as an economical architect?" We soon had the work in train, but, of course, before any active steps were taken, all our proposals were submitted to, and approved by the Education Department.

The question of religious instruction became urgent, and I was pleased and surprised at carrying a unanimous resolution through the Board—although it included some Nonconformists—that the Vicar (No. 2), who had declined to be nominated as a candidate for election, should be invited to undertake the religious instruction of the school. The Vicar consented, and the arrangement worked smoothly for some years. One day, later, a member rose, and inquired if the children were receiving religious instruction. "Yes," I said. "Are the children taught science?" "Yes," again. "Well," said he, "how do you reconcile the fact, when religion and science are not in agreement?" Fortunately, I had been lately taking a course of Darwin, and I was able to refer him to the concluding lines of the *Origin of Species.* We debated the matter with some energy, but having made his protest, the member was satisfied to let the matter drop.

All went well thereafter until we were settled in the new building, and Vicar No. 3 was in possession of the living. He was young and inexperienced in the conduct of a parish, and was imbued with ideas of what he considered a more ornate and elaborate form of worship. Innovations followed—lighted candles over the altar and the appointment of a Server at the Communion Service. Almost immediately I heard objections from the villagers; they could not understand the necessity for a couple of dim candles in a church on a summer day, when the whole world outside was ablaze with the glory of the sun.

A member arose at a Board meeting, and began: "Mr. Chairman, I wish to draw the attention of the Board to the question of religious instruction in the school, for I reckon that our children are being taught a lot of Popery." I could see that he had been in consultation with other members of the Board, and that he had a majority behind him. I tried hard to smooth matters over, but they had made up their minds, and he carried his resolution that, in future, the new Vicar should be authorized to enter the school for the purpose of religious instruction only one day a week! I think this small indulgence was accorded only as a result of my efforts in his favour, though I was by no means pleased with the innovations myself.

I put the matter before the Vicar, asking him if he thought his novelties were worth while in the face of the opposition of the village and the loss of his religious influence with the children. He would not go back from what, he said, he regarded as a matter of principle, and could not see that he was throwing away a unique opportunity, but he agreed to withdraw the unwelcome Server.

In spite of the fact that every detail of the new school building had been submitted to, and approved by, the Education Department, trouble began with an officious inspector, who on his first visit complained of the ventilation. An elementary school is never exactly a bed of roses, but we had a lofty building and classrooms, with plenty of windows, which could be adjusted to admit as much or as little fresh air as was requisite. We protested without result, and we had eventually to pull the new walls about and spend £20 on what we considered an uncalled-for alteration.

Our inspectors of schools varied greatly: some were quiet with the children and considerate with the teachers; others vindicated their authority by unnecessary fault-finding, upsetting the teachers and alarming the children. In the days of our voluntary school I have seen a room full of children in a state of nervous tension, and the mistress and pupil-teachers in tears, as the result of inconsiderate reprimands and irritable speech. My sympathies have been strongly aroused on such occasions with a child's terror of being made an exhibition before the others. As a boy at Harrow, in the form of the Rev. F. W. Farrar, afterwards Dean of Canterbury, I had an unpleasant experience, though it was no fault of his and quite unintentional. The Russian Government had sent a deputation of two learned professors to England, to inquire into the educational system of the Public Schools, with the view of sending a member of the Royal family for education in this country. Among other schools, they visited Harrow, and Mr. Farrar's form was one of those selected for inspection. It was the evening of a winter's day, when, at the four o'clock school, we found two very formidable-looking old gentlemen in spectacles and many furs seated near the master's desk. Great was the consternation, but Mr. Farrar was careful not to call upon any boy who would be likely to exhibit himself as a failure. I was seated near Mr. Farrar, at one end of a bench. He had a habit, when wanting to change his position, of moving quite unconsciously across the intervening space between his desk and this bench, and placing one foot on the bench close to the nearest boy, he would, with one hand, play with the boy's hair, while he held his book in the other. With horror, I found him approaching, and shortly his hand was on my head, rubbing my hair round and round, and ruffling it in a fashion very trying to any boy who was neat and careful of his personal appearance. I could see the Russians staring through their spectacles at these proceedings; possibly they thought it a form of punishment unknown in Russia, and my feelings of humiliation can be imagined. Finally he gave me a smack on the cheek and retired to his desk, leaving my hair in a state of chaos, though he had not the least idea of having done anything which might appear unusual to the foreigners.

Dear "old Farrar"!—as we irreverently called him—it was an education in itself to be in his form. I had the uncommon privilege of moving upwards in the School at very much the same rate as he did as a master, though I fear for my school reputation none too quickly. He first kindled my admiration for the classic giants of English literature, more especially the poets, taught me to appreciate the rolling periods of Homer, and even the beauty of the characters of the Greek alphabet. He was a voluminous student of the best in every form of ancient and modern literature. He always kept a copy of Milton, his favourite poet I think, on his desk, and, whenever a passage in the Greek or Latin classics occurred, for which he could produce a parallel, quoted pages without reference to the book.

I recall my delight and pride when I was sent on two occasions to the headmaster, Dr. Butler, the late Master of Trinity, with copies of original verses; and the honour I felt it to inscribe them, at Mr. Farrar's request, in a MS. book he kept for the purpose of collecting approved original efforts in the author's own writing. For it was his habit once a week to give us subjects for verses or composition. A unique effort of the Captain of the School cricket eleven, C. F. Buller, comes back to me as I write; it did not however appear in the MS. book. The School Chapel was the subject, full of interest and stirring to the imagination, if only for the aisle to the memory of Harrow officers who fell in the Crimea. Buller's flight of imagination was as absurd as it was impertinent:

> "The things in the Chapel nonsense are,
> Don't you think so dear Far*rar!*"

Mr. Farrar, however, never took offence at such sallies. I remember, when he was denouncing the old "yellow back" novels, murmurs becoming audible, which were intended to reach him, of "Eric! Eric!"—the title of his early school-boy story—he only smiled in acknowledgment. And on an April 1st several boys who had plotted beforehand gazed simultaneously and persistently at a spot on the ceiling, until his eyes followed theirs unthinkingly in the same direction, when it occurred to him, as nothing unusual was visible, that it was All Fools' Day. He was very playful and indulgent; he kept a "squash" racquet ball on his desk, and could throw it with accurate aim if he noticed a boy dreaming or inattentive. He would never when scoring the marks enter a 0, even after an abject failure, always saying, "Give him a charity 1!"

Boys are quick judges of sermons: if interested, they listen without an effort; if not interested, they *cannot* listen. Whenever Mr. Farrar's turn came as preacher in the School Chapel there was a subtle stir and whisper of appreciation, "It's Farrar to-day." He was a natural orator. I can still hear his magnificent voice swelling in tones of passionate denunciation decreasing to gentle appeal, and dying away in tender pathos. This was education in the true sense of the word, and though I have wandered a long way from my immediate subject, I feel that the digression is not irrelevant in contrast with the mechanical instruction that goes by the name of education in the Board Schools. I cannot help recalling too that in the ancient IVth Form Room at Harrow, the roughest of old benches were, and I believe still are, considered good enough for future bishops, judges, and statesmen; while in the Board Schools expensive polished desks and seats have to be provided at the cost of the ratepayers to be shortly kicked to pieces by hobnailed shoes.

I was present at some amusing incidents in examinations at our village school. A small boy was commanded by an inspector to read aloud, and began in the usual child's high-keyed, expressionless, and unpunctuated monotone: "I-have-six-little-pigs-two-of-them-are-white-two-of-them-are-black-and-two-of-them-are-spotted." "That's not the way to read," interposed the inspector. "Give me the book." He stood up, striking an attitude, head thrown well back, and reading with great deliberation and emphasis: "I have *six* LITTLE PIGS; two of them are *white!* Two of them are *black!* and (confidentially) two of them are spot*tered!*"

I once picked up an elementary reading book in the school, and read as follows: "Tom said to Jack, 'There is a hayrick down in the meadow; shall we go and set it on fire?'" And so on, with an account of the conflagration, highly coloured. So much for town ideas of the education of country children; the suggestion was enough to bring about the catastrophe, given the opportunity and a box of matches.

Some of the inspectors were very agreeable men; they occasionally came to luncheon at my house, and I once asked where the best-managed schools were to be found. The reply was, "In parishes where the voluntary schools still exist, and the feudal system is mildly administered."

Our villagers, reading of the large sums that we were obliged to expend in response to the requirements of the Education Department, and finding the consequent rates a burden, began to think of economy and nothing but economy, so that though I had expected them to be only too anxious to provide the very best possible education for their own children, it came as a surprise that this was quite a subordinate aim to that of keeping down the cost. And this was the more unexpected, as the main cost fell upon the large ratepayers, like myself and the railway company and the owners of land and cottages rented rate-free. At the next election several of these economists became candidates, with the result that many of the original members including myself were not returned, in spite of the fact that our well-planned and well-built schools were erected at a lower cost per child than any in the neighbourhood. I was not sorry to escape from the monotony of listening to interminable debates as to whether a necessary broom or such-like trifle should be bought at one shilling or one and threepence. For this was the kind of subject that the Board could understand and liked to enlarge upon, while really important proposals were carried with little consideration. As a matter of fact, members of a School Board are no more than dummies in the hands of an inflexible Department, and are appointed to carry out orders and regulations without the power of modification, even when quite unsuitable for a country village school.

There was some little excitement at the election; one of the members of the old Board had been called "an ignoramus," in the stress of battle, and being much concerned and mystified asked a neighbour what the term signified, adding, no doubt thinking of a hippopotamus, that he believed it was some kind of animal! His knowledge of zoology was probably as limited as that disclosed by the following story:

A menagerie was on view at Evesham, to the great joy of many juveniles as well as older people, for such exhibitions were not very common in the town. Very early next morning, a farmer, living about two miles from Aldington, was awakened by a shower of small stones on his bedroom window. Looking out he saw his shepherd in much excitement and alarm. "Oh master, master, there's a beast with two tails, one in front and one behind, a-pullin' up the mangolds, and a-eatin' of 'em!" The farmer hurried to the spot and saw an African elephant which had escaped during the night; he was wondering how to proceed when two keepers appeared and the strange beast was led quietly back to the town.

As chairman of our School Board I early recognized among the members discoverers of mare's-nests, who lost no opportunity of exhibiting their own importance by intruding such matters into the already overflowing *agenda*, and my method of dealing with them was so successful, though I believe not original, that it may be found useful by those called upon to preside over any of the multitudinous councils now in existence. Whenever the member produced his cherished discovery—generally very shadowy as to detail—I proposed the appointment of a subcommittee, consisting of him and his sympathizers, to inquire into the matter, and report at the next Board meeting. In this way I shunted the bother of the investigation of usually some trifle or unsubstantiated opinion on to his own shoulders, so that, when he realized the time and trouble involved, he became much less interested, and we heard very little more of the subject.

I suppose that everybody living in a country parish, who can look back over the period of fifty years of compulsory education, would agree that the results are insignificant in comparison with the effort, and one cannot help wondering whether, after all, they justify the gigantic cost. We appear to have tried to build too quickly on an insecure foundation. Nature produces no permanent work in a hurry, and Art is a blind leader unless she submits to Nature's laws. The pace has been too great, and the fabric which we have reared is already showing the defects in its construction.

How otherwise can we account for the littleness of the men representing "the people," who have been rushed into the big positions, and for the vulgarity of the present age? Vulgarity in public worship; vulgarity in the manners, the speeches, and the ideals of the House of Commons; vulgarity in "literature," on the stage, in music, in the studio, and in a section of the Press; vulgarity in building and the desecration of beautiful places; vulgarity in form and colour of dress and decoration. We are far behind the design and construction of the domestic furniture of 150 years ago, and we have never equalled the architecture of the earliest periods, for stability and stateliness.

The skim milk seems to have come to the top and the cream has gone to the bottom, as the result of the contravention of the laws of evolution, and the failure to perceive the analogy between the simplest methods of agriculture, and the cultivation of mentality. We have expected fruit and flowers from waste and untilled soil; we sowed the seed of instruction without even ploughing the land, or eradicating the prominent weeds, and we are reaping a crop of thistles where we looked for figs, and thorns where we looked for grapes. The seed scattered so lavishly by the wayside was devoured by the fowls of the air; that which was sown upon the stony places, where there was not much earth, could not withstand the heat of summer; and that which fell among thorns was choked by the unconquered possessors of the field. A little, a very little, which "fell into good ground brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold"; and therein lies our only consolation.

The educational enthusiasts of 1870 forgot that the material they had to work upon did not come from inherited refinement and intelligence; that it was evolved from a parentage content with a vocabulary of some 500 words; that there was little nobility of home influence to assist in the process of development; they crammed it with matter which it could not assimilate, they took it from the open country air and the sunshine confined it in close and crowded school-rooms, and produced what we see everywhere at the present time, at the cost of physical deterioration—a diseased and unsettled mentality.

I am aware that there are those who decline to admit any influence of mental heredity, and argue that environment is the only factor to be considered. In a clever and well-reasoned work on the subject I lately read, this proposition was substantiated by instances observable especially among birds brought up in unnatural conditions. The writer, however, entirely forgot the most conclusive piece of evidence in favour of mental heredity which it is possible to adduce—namely, that of the brood of ducklings, who, in spite of the unmistakable manifestations of alarm on the part of a frantic foster-mother hen, take to the water and enjoy it on the very first opportunity.

CHAPTER X

VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS: CRICKET—FOOTBALL—FLOWER SHOW—BAND—POSTMAN—CONCERTS

> "There is sweet music here that softer falls
> Than petals from blown roses on the grass."
> *The Lotus-Eaters.*

AMONG village institutions a cricket club was started soon after I first came, and I was able to lend a meadow in which the members could play. I held the sinecure office of President. The members met, discussed ways and means, drew up regulations, and instituted fines for various delinquencies. Swearing was expensive at threepence each time, but there was no definition of what were to be considered "swear words." Locally, a usual expletive is, "daazz it," or, "I'll be daazzed," and it was not long before a member making use of this euphemism was accused of swearing. He protested that it was not recognized by philological authorities as coming under the category, but he had to pay up.

A village cricket match was regarded more as a contest than a pastime; each side feared the censure of his parish, if conquered, so nothing had to be given away likely to prove an advantage to an opposing team. I once saw a member snatch a bat belonging to his own club from one of the other side who was about to appropriate it for his innings with, "No you don't." How different is the feeling, and how ready to help, a member of a really sporting team would have been in similar circumstances! Referring to help or advice in cricket matters, a story is told of the late Dr. W. G. Grace. The incident happened in an adjoining county to Worcestershire. The great batsman, crossing Clifton Down, came upon some boys at cricket. Three sticks represented the wickets, arranged so wide apart that the ball could pass through without disturbing them. Ever ready to help, Dr. Grace pointed out the fault and readjusted the sticks; as he turned away he heard, "What does 'e know about it, I wonder !"

This carries me to a parallel happening at Stratford-on-Avon. The late Sir Henry Irving and a friend fell in with a native on the outskirts of the town, and being anxious to test the local reputation of the poet asked the man if he had heard of a person named Shakespeare. The man assented and volunteered the information that he was a writer. Did he "know what Shakespeare had written ?" Their informant could not say, but, a moment after they had parted, he called back that he believed he had written "part of the Bible."

An ancient villager, who was secretary of our Club and always acted as umpire, gave me "out," incorrectly, for accidentally touching the wicket when the ball was "dead." I retired without contesting his decision, as I had been taught. Next time we met he apologized, having discovered his mistake, but he was greatly impressed by my practical example of "playing the game."

Cricket, though popular in my first years at Aldington, gradually became difficult to arrange. As the market-garden industry superseded farming, the young men found full employment for the long summer evenings on their allotments and those of their parents. In the winter, when horticultural work is not so pressing, they had plenty of time on their hands, and a football club was formed. It flourished exceedingly, and Badsey became almost invincible among the neighbouring villages and even against the towns. They distinguished themselves in the local League matches, and on one occasion, something like two thousand spectators assembled to witness a final which Badsey won, in the meadow I lent them; and I had the honour of presiding at a grand dinner to celebrate the event. I notice in the local papers that in spite of the interruption of the war they are now again thriving and earning new laurels.

Our most important fête day was that upon which the Badsey, Aldington, and Wickhamford Flower Show was held. The credit, for the original inception and organization of this popular festival, is almost entirely due, I think, to the public spirit and determination of my old friend and co-churchwarden, Mr. Julius Sladden, of Badsey, and it gives me much pleasure to record the debt of gratitude which the three villages still owe him.

The Show is held as nearly as possible on the day of the ancient Badsey wake, in most parishes still celebrated on the day of the patron saint. In the case of Badsey the anniversary of the wake is the 25th of July (St. James's day). As a wake Badsey's observance is a thing of the past; it was formerly a time of much cider-drinking, a meeting-day for friends and relations, and for various trials of strength and skill, though I believe the carousals outlasted the sports by many years.

Nothing happier, in the way of a revival, and more civilized enjoyment, could have been devised than a flower show, and it is now one of the most popular fixtures of the neighbourhood with exceedingly keen competition. Besides fruit, flowers, and vegetables, the exhibits include such produce as butter and eggs, and my wife was very successful with these, but on one occasion was rather disappointed to find a beautiful dish of Langshan eggs, almost preternaturally brown and rich-looking, disqualified. The judges were not acquainted with the peculiarities of the breed—then a new one—and the reason for disqualification, as we afterwards discovered, was "artificially coloured." I believe exhibitors have been known to use coffee for this purpose, and the judges, who had not the exhibitors' names before them, fancied this to be an instance.

The children's exhibits of wild flower bouquets I always considered at this and similar shows far the most interesting and beautiful among the flowers; but, unfortunately, they very soon droop in a hot tent and look rather unhappy.

Aldington Band was the outcome of a desire for musical expression on the part of a few parishioners with some skill and experience in such matters; it included performers on wind instruments and a big drum. The Band was unfortunate at first in purchasing instruments of differing pitch, as was discovered by my wife on attending a practice at the request of the members. She pointed out the fault, and found an instructor from Evesham to give them a course of lessons, so that with a new set of instruments they soon improved. It was difficult, at first, to find a suitable place for practice. A neighbour, a little doubtful as to their attainments, suggested the railway arch in one of my meadows as a nice airy spot under cover, but later expressed doubts as to the safety of the trains running overhead on account of the violence of the commotion beneath! This, of course, was mere chaff, for they soon became so efficient that a large room was found for them in the village, and eventually they were annually engaged to perform the musical programme at the Badsey, Aldington, and Wickhamford Flower Show. My gardener was the leading spirit of the Band, a great optimist and the most willing man of any who ever reigned in my garden. There was nothing he would not cheerfully undertake, and when we had a difficulty in finding a sweep as required, he volunteered for the work and became quite an adept, with the set of rods and brushes I bought for the purpose.

Our postman, though not a villager, was quite an institution; he walked a matter of ten miles a day from Evesham to Bretforton, taking Aldington and Badsey on the way, and back at night. He filled up the interval between the incoming and outgoing posts at Bretforton, working at his trade as tailor. Entering our village each evening, he announced his arrival by three blasts on his tin horn; he was very shy of being observed in this performance, and the people had to catch him as he passed and hand him their letters. He must have walked nearly 100,000 miles in the many years he was our postman, and he told me before I left that more letters were addressed to the Manor when I first came, than to all the rest of the houses in the village together. When correspondence became more general a pillar-box was erected, but I always regretted the loss of the familiar notes of the tin horn.

Among Aldington's amusements no account would be complete without a reference to the numerous concerts and entertainments for charitable objects which my wife organized, and in which her musical talent enabled her to take a prominent part; and although I feel some hesitation in dealing with so personal a matter, I am certain that many of those who co-operated with her in the organization and the performance of these affairs will be pleased to have their recollections of her own part in them revived.

She possessed a natural soprano voice of great sweetness and flexibility, in combination with the sympathetic ability and clear enunciation which add so much to the charm of vocal expression. She was not allowed to begin singing, in earnest, before she was nineteen, for fear of straining so delicate a voice, and she then had the advantage of the tuition of Signor Caravoglia, one of the most celebrated teachers of the time.

His method included deliberation in taking breath, thorough opening of the mouth, practice before a mirror to produce a pleasing effect, and to avoid facial contortion; he would not allow any visible effort, the aim being to sing as naturally and spontaneously as a bird. His wife played the accompaniments, so that the master could give his whole attention to the attitude, production, and facial expression of the pupil.

Signor Caravoglia only consented to teach her on the express condition that she would not sing in choruses, on account of the danger of strain and overexertion. She practised regularly, chiefly exercises, two hours a day in separate half hours. Her talent was soon recognized at Malvern, where she lived before her marriage, and her assistance was in great demand for amateur charity concerts.

I have a book full of newspaper reports of my wife's performances, containing notices of concerts at Malvern repeatedly, Kidderminster, Worcester, at Birmingham under the auspices of the Musical Section of the Midland Institute—a very great honour before a highly critical audience—Alcester, Pershore, Moreton-in-the-Marsh, Evesham, Broadway, Badsey, Wallingford, and a great many villages in the Evesham district. At Moreton she sang for the local Choral Society, taking the soprano solos in the first part of Haydn's *Spring*, and the local paper reported that her "birdlike voice added much to the beauty of the cantata." In the second part of the concert she gave *The Bird that came in Spring*, by Sterndale Bennett. I was always a little nervous during this song in anticipation of the upper C towards the finale, but it never failed to come true and brilliant. As we were leaving by train the following morning we met a dear old musician who had taken part in the chorus of the cantata. He begged to be introduced to her, and said in his hearty congratulations on her performance, that never before had such a note been heard in Moreton.

At one of the Broadway concerts my wife had the pleasure of meeting Miss Maude Valerie White, who was playing the accompaniments for performers of her own compositions, including *The Devout Lover*, which, she told Miss White, she considered one of the best songs in the English language, at the same time asking for her autograph. Miss White was kind enough to write her signature with the MS. music of the first phrase—notes and words—of the song in a book which my wife kept for the autographs of distinguished musicians and celebrated people.

While at Malvern my wife once heard Jenny Lind in public, and she describes it as a most memorable occasion. Jenny Lind had for some years retired from public performance, but consented to reappear at the request of a deputation of railway employees anxious to arrange a concert in aid of the widows and orphans of officials killed in a recent railway accident. She stipulated that she should sing in two duets only, choosing the other voice herself, and she selected Miss Hilda Wilson, the well-known contralto of that time.

They sang two duets by Rubinstein, one being *The Song of the Summer Birds*, full of elaborate execution. Her voice was so true, sweet and flexible, trilling and warbling like a bird, and taking the A flat as a climax of delight at the conclusion with the greatest ease, that with closed eyes it might have been taken for the effort of a young girl.

Jenny Lind was over seventy at the time; she was erect, tall, and graceful; she wore a black dress with a good deal of white lace, and a white lace cap. She was then Madame Otto Goldschmidt, living at the Wynd's Point on the Herefordshire Beacon of the Malvern Range, and had long been known as the " Swedish Nightingale."

CHAPTER XI

DEALERS — LUCK MONEY — FAIRS — SALES — EFFECT OF CLIMATE ON CATTLE AND SHEEP—AGRICULTURAL SHOWS

> "I'll give thrice so much land
> To any well-deserving friend;
> But in the way of bargain, mark ye me,
> I'll cavil on the ninth part of a hair."
>
> *1 Henry IV.*

DEALERS of all kinds were much more frequent callers at farm-houses in the early days of my farming, than latterly when auction sales, to some extent, superseded private negotiations, but the horse-dealer remained constant, because comparatively few horses were offered by auction. The horse-dealers appeared to conform to an understanding that it was a breach of etiquette to exceed certain well-marked boundaries in their search for purchases, or to interfere in each other's business. This principle was carried so far as to prevent dealers from one of these "countries" purchasing a horse at a fair coming from another dealer's "country," and the understanding of course minimized competition likely to raise the price. The dealers however I think, gave fair values, governed for the most part by the prices obtainable by them in the large towns.

Most of my horses, when for sale, were bought by a man in a considerable way of business, a well-known breeder, too, of shire horses, taking many prizes at the leading shows. A handsome man with a presence, and an excellent judge, shrewd but straight. He would ask the price after examining the animal, and make an offer which he would very seldom exceed if refused at first; but he would spend some time in conversation, apparently quite irrelevant and very amusing, though always returning to the point at intervals with arguments in favour of the acceptance of his bid. He was so genial and pleasant and such good company, for no man was ever better acquainted with the ways of the world, that he very rarely, I think, left the premises without a deal, though sometimes he was in his gig before the final bargain was struck. It is a custom of the trade for the seller to give something back to the buyer by way of "luck money," and the last time I did business with him I refused to give more than one shilling each on two horses, as I never received more than that sum when a buyer myself. He accepted cheerfully, telling me that a shilling each was quite worth taking, as he had a thousand horses through his hands in the course of every twelve months, and that a thousand shillings meant £50 a year.

The best piece of horse-dealing I ever did, was the purchase of a six months old colt for £26, winning £20 in prizes with him as a two-year-old, working him regularly at three and four on the farm, and selling him at five for eighty guineas to a large brewery firm. Eighty guineas in those days was a big price for a cart horse, though, of course, in modern times, owing to the war, much higher prices can be obtained.

I remember another dealer, who, a notable figure in a white top hat with a deep black band, and large coloured spectacles, was to be seen at all the fairs and principal sales. He, too, had an ingratiating manner, and would accost a young farmer with a hearty, "Good-morning, Squire," or some such flattering introduction. A wise dealer always knows how to keep up amicable relations with a possible seller or buyer, and never descends to abuse, or the assumption of a personal injury if he cannot persuade a seller to accept his price, as is the case with some dealers with less *savoir faire*.

A successful cattle dealer I knew had similar tactics of fraternity, always addressing his sellers as "Governor," with marked respect. But the best instance of this diplomatic spirit occurred in the case of a deal between an old Hampshire friend of mine and a well-known and historic sheep dealer from the same county. My friend had lately become the happy father of twins, the fact being widely known in the neighbourhood, for he was a very prominent man. He had 100 sheep for sale, and the dealer was inspecting them, in a pen near the house. As the bargain proceeded, the front door opened, and a nurse-maid appeared with the twins in their perambulator. The dealer noticed them immediately, and was not slow to turn the incident to his advantage. "There they be, there they be, the little darlings," he called out, "a sovereign apiece nurse, a sovereign apiece." Diving into a capacious pocket, he pulled out a handful of gold and silver, and selecting two sovereigns he handed them to the nurse for the children. "After that," my friend said, "what could I do but sell him the sheep, though he got them at two shillings a head less than I ought to have made." Now two shillings a head, on one hundred sheep, represents ten pounds, leaving eight pounds which the dealer earned by his keen insight into human nature.

This dealer carried on business with a brother, and they were to be seen for very many years at all the large Hampshire summer sheep fairs, where indeed, sometimes, when prices were rising, they owned nearly all the sheep offered for sale, having bought them up beforehand. As in a favourable summer when there was plenty of keep and a good prospect of abundant roots prices would rise as much as 10s. a head during the months of the big fairs, and as at a single fair as many as 30,000 sheep would be for sale, the chances of profit offered to the courageous dealer with capital are manifest.

Though risen from small beginnings, these brothers amassed considerable fortunes, all of which, it was said, they invested in real estate, so that they were known at one time to be worth at least £100,000; and, as they continued in business for some years after the time of which I am writing, they must have exceeded that sum considerably as a total, though the values of land began to fall away towards the end of their active existence.

The more energetic of the two used very original phrases, in which he extolled the physical virtues of flocks he had to sell; referring to their size, he would say, "Just look at their backs! look at their backs! they be as long as a wet Sunday!" Watching him, you could see that while giving full attention to his customer, and keeping him in a good humour with pleasant chat, while a bargain was proceeding, his glance perpetually wandered to the moving crowd around the pens, and that he had not only eyes, but ears, open to catch any impression bearing on the progress of the general trade. He knew everybody, and intuition told him upon what business they were present.

These two dealers combined money-lending with sheep-dealing; if a buyer had not the ready cash they would give credit for the purchase price, the sheep forming the security; it being understood that when they were again for sale the lenders should have the selling of them on commission.

Speaking of horse-dealers I referred to the custom of giving "luck money," otherwise called "chap money." The word "chap" takes its derivation from the Anglo-Saxon *ceap* price or bargain, and *ceapean*, to bargain, whence come the words "chop," to exchange; "cheap," "Cheapside," "Mealcheapen Street" in Worcester, "cheapjack," etc. Also, the prefix in the names of market towns, such as Chipping Campden, Chipping Norton, etc. There is a curious place-name here in Burley, New Forest, where I am now living, spelt "Shappen," which puzzled me until I chanced to meet with an ancient print of a village merry-making, with dancing and a May-pole and found that the name Shappen applied especially to the spot, and that not far away the Forest ponies and cattle were formerly penned for sale at an annual fair in a lane, still called Pound Lane "Pound" is from the Anglo-Saxon *pund*, a fold or inclosure. Shappen is evidently, therefore, derived from *ceap* (and possibly *pund*) as a place in which bargains were struck, and the name testifies to the extreme antiquity of the New Forest pony and cattle fair formerly held there.

There are several notable horse fairs still held near Evesham. Besides the one at Pershore, already mentioned, the most important fairs are held at Stow-on-the-Wold and Shipston-on-Stour, both very out-of-the-way places; and many stories of the wiles of horse-copers were related in connection therewith. I remember the following told as occurring at Stow-on-the-Wold. A man approached a simple-looking young farmer, and getting into conversation with him, pointed out a horse not far off, telling him that he had quarrelled with the owner who refused in consequence to sell him the horse which he wished to buy. He promised the farmer £2 if he would undertake the negotiation, and could buy the horse for £10. The farmer agreed, and after some apparent difficulty succeeded in effecting the purchase at the sum named, paid the money and returned with the horse to the place where he had left his acquaintance. The latter, however, had disappeared, and after searching the fair from one end to the other, the farmer took back the horse, to repudiate the bargain. The owner had also vanished, and the farmer found himself with an ancient screw, which eventually he was glad to get rid of at a pound a leg, losing £6 on the deal.

There are small pig-dealers, in almost every village, on the lookout for bargains, and very cute men they generally are. One of these well-known at Aldington, though nearly blind, could tell the points and value of any pig in a marvellous way almost by intuition; it was said of him that, "though blind, he was a better judge of a pig than most folks with their eyes open."

At farm and other auction sales there are always anxious buyers who make a practice of trying to depreciate ("crabbing," as it is called) any article or property they particularly wish to purchase, by making damaging statements or insinuations to anybody whom, they fear, is also a probable buyer. At a sale of cottage property adjoining a public-house, in a village not far from Aldington, a keen purchaser remarked that there was no water on the premises. The auctioneer, however, knowing that water was not his man's strong point, immediately replied, "Oh, never mind the water, sir, there's plenty of whisky to be had next door." At another property sale, the tenant of the house on offer, gratuitously informed me that the roof was in a very bad state; knowing my man, I was not surprised when the house was knocked down to him, but I never saw any repairs to the roof in progress afterwards.

A friend of mine had a caretaker in an empty house, and, finding that no applications to view ever got beyond that stage, called at the house with his wife, ostensibly as intending tenants. He was not personally known to the caretaker, and on making the usual inquiries, found the man by no means enthusiastic as to the amenities of the place, and particularly doubtful as to the drainage, so much so as to make it plain that any otherwise likely tenant would be repelled. Knowing that all the sanitary arrangements were in perfect order, he disclosed his identity, much to the dismay of the caretaker who, of course, was dismissed.

The person who asks damaging questions of the auctioneer or solicitor at a property sale, though perhaps not declared the buyer on the fall of the hammer, not infrequently proves later to have been so, having employed an agent to bid for him.

At a sale of farm stock and implements I was examining a waggon practically new, though with no intention of buying, when I was surprised by a cousin of the vendor volunteering the statement that, having lately borrowed the waggon, he noticed one of the wheels giving out a suspicious noise when in use, as if something were wrong. This was a particularly bad case of "crabbing," as the man eventually became the purchaser at a high price.

It is an alarming sensation to see one's name on a waggon for the first time, especially when the vehicle has been wholly repainted in blue or yellow to represent the owner's supposed political tendencies, for such was the custom in

Worcestershire; but perhaps one's name, address, and crest on a hop-pocket is more alarming still, when we remember that twenty or more of these pockets, all marked alike, will form each of several loads to be carted from a London railway station to the Borough, the seat of the hop-trade, on the way to the factor's warehouses, for all beholders to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest."

In the delightful and now somewhat rare book *Talpa; or, The Chronicles of a Clay Farm*, by Chandos Wren Hoskins, one of the few agricultural works ever written by a scholar, he refers to his first experience of this sort, when speaking of his difficulty in making up his mind as to whether he should let the property into which he had just come by inheritance, or occupy it himself, as follows: "What was to be done? Apostatize from all the promises and vows made from my youth up, and take it *in hand*—that is, in a bailiff's hand, which certain foregone experiences had led me to conceive was of all things the most *out of hand* (if that may be called so, which empties the hand and the pocket too). Such seemed the only alternative! At first it was an impossibility—then an improbability—and then, as the ear of bearded corn wins its forbidden way up the schoolboy's sleeve, and gains a point in advance by every effort to stop or expel it, so did every determination, every reflection counteract the very purpose it was summoned to oppose, and, in short, one fine morning I almost jumped a yard backward at seeing—my own name on a waggon!"

The reference to a bailiff reminds me of my father's illustration, one evening at dessert, of the difference between a farmer selling his produce personally, or doing so through the medium of a bailiff. Taking three wine-glasses—No. 1 representing the farmer, No. 2 the bailiff, and No. 3 the purchaser—he filled No. 1 with port and poured the contents into No. 3; what few drops were left in No. 1 remained the property of the farmer. But if the wine were poured into No. 2, and from thence into No. 3, however much the complete transference was attempted, some small portion always remained for the benefit of the intermediary.

I always conducted my sales personally, except in small matters, and my experience in the latter proved an exception to the above rule, as I have previously related (pp. 17 and 20).

I commend *Talpa,* with George Cruikshank's clever illustrations, to the attention of all readers of the curiosities of agriculture, as well as to practical men; it is one of those uncommon books which enters into the humorous side of farming under disadvantages—as, for instance, prejudiced labourers who have long been employed upon such work as draining. The author found one of the men, after instructions to lay the pipes at a depth of three feet, cutting a drain about eighteen inches deep, *laying in the tiles, one by one, and filling the earth in over them as he went.* "I've been a-draining this forty year and more—I ought to know summat about it." The author adds, "Need I tell you who said this ? or give you the whole of the colloquy to which it furnished the epilogue ?" *Talpa* was published sixty-seven years ago, but it contains much that might well be taken to heart by our post-war amateur agricultural reconstructionists.

The tactics of a combination of buyers at a sale of household goods, with an arrangement for one man to buy everything they want, so as to avoid competition, is well known as "the knock out." I saw a most flagrant case at a sale of valuable books at an old Cotswold Manor House. The books were tied up, quite promiscuously, in parcels of half a dozen or more, and although the room was crowded with dealers who had been examining them with interest beforehand, practically only one bidder appeared, and nearly every lot was sold to him for a few shillings. I noticed several men taking notes of the prices made, and, immediately the book sale was finished, they removed them to the lawn, where they were resold by one of the gang at greatly enhanced prices. They would, of course, eventually deduct the original cost from the amount now realized and divide the difference amongst the buyers at the second sale, *pro rata*, according to the amount of each man's total purchases.

Cattle-dealers, with a reputation as judges of fat stock at auctions, have to be very careful not to let inexperienced butchers see them bidding, because the latter will bid on the strength of the dealer's estimate of value, arguing that the animal must be worth more to himself as a butcher, than to the dealer who has to sell again. I have often watched the crafty ways of such dealers not to give themselves away in this manner, and their methods of concealing their bids. One I particularly noticed, whose habit was to stand just below the auctioneer's rostrum, facing the animal in the ring, with his back to the auctioneer. When he wished to bid he raised his head very slightly, making a nod backwards to the auctioneer, who, knowing his man, was looking out for this method of attracting his attention.

Though the ordinary farm sale is by far the most amusing and picturesque, the sale of pedigree stock is much more sensational. When the shorthorn mania was at its height, and the merits of Bates and Booth blood were hotly debated, when such phrases as "the sea-otter touch," referring to the mossy coat of the red, white, or roan shorthorn, were heard, and the Americans were competing with our own breeders in purchasing the best stock they could find—prices were hoisted to an extravagant height. There is no forming a "knock-out" at a pedigree sale; sturdy competition is the only recognized method of purchase, and the sporting spirit is a strong incentive, especially when the vendor is known as a courageous buyer at the sales of the leading breeders.

I attended the dispersal of a herd where the owner had been for years one of these sporting buyers; he had, however, gone more for catalogue blue-blood than perceptible excellence, and the stock were brought into the ring scarcely up to the exhibition form which a pedigree sale demands. The American buyers were well represented, and the popularity of the vendor brought a great crowd of home buyers, so that the sale went off with spirit. I chanced to sit next to the veterinary surgeon who attended my own stock as well as the herd on offer, and it was amusing to hear his confidential communications as the animals were sold at huge prices. He knew their faults and weaknesses professionally, and it was no breach of confidence, when a cow had passed through the ring and extracted a big figure from an American buyer, to whisper them in my ear. I noticed that the Americans, no doubt with commissions to buy a particular strain of pedigree, appeared to pay more attention to the catalogue than to the cattle themselves, and I saw some sold at fancy prices, which I should really have been sorry to see in my own non-pedigree herd. The sale was a great success, from the vendor's point of view at any rate, and I think the average exceeded seventy guineas all round, including calves only a few months old.

Some years later I visited Shipston-on-Stour with two friends to attend a shorthorn sale in that neighbourhood. Mr. Thornton, the well-known pedigree salesman, was the auctioneer. He waited about for a long time after the hour fixed for the sale, until it became evident that something had gone wrong. It appeared that the sheriff's representative had served a writ on the vendor restraining the sale, and although it was stated that Thornton had offered a personal guarantee that the proceeds should be handed over to the sheriff, the representative could not exceed his instructions, and the sale was abandoned. A large company, including many foreign buyers, had assembled; it was difficult to get these together at a postponement, and when the sale was proceeded with some weeks later, I fear the result could scarcely have proved so satisfactory.

The Vale of Evesham is particularly suitable for pedigree shorthorn breeding, as the soil and climate are very favourable for their production according to exhibition type. It is otherwise with the Jersey, for they quickly adapt themselves to the difference in their environment as compared with the conditions in their native Channel Island. When I exchanged my shorthorns for Jerseys, owing to the foreign competition in the production of beef, which at sevenpence a pound compared unfavourably with butter at fifteenpence, I imported my cows direct from the Island, and afterwards bred from their descendants, selling the bull calves, and occasionally buying a young bull from Jersey. The blood was therefore kept absolutely pure, and, as I was a member of the English Jersey Society, all my stock were entered in the Herd Book.

As time went on my cattle presented a noticeable change from the original type; they were larger, developing much more hair and bone, and though they gained in strength of constitution, and were handsome and profitable, they gradually lost the dainty deer-like appearance of the imported stock; and though quite as valuable for the purposes of the dairy, they would have been regarded in the show ring by connoisseurs as having a tendency to coarseness. I was, at first, successful at the shows, but as the character of my cattle altered I recognized that they would stand no chance against Jerseys bred on lighter land, and in a climate more nearly approximating to that of their native country.

Precisely the same thing happened with my pedigree Shropshire sheep; environment altered their character and produced a different type—bone, wool, and size all increased. The wool was coarser and darker in colour; they were good, useful, hardy stock, but could not compete in quality with the pedigree sheep bred in their own county. No pedigree Shropshire breeder will, as a rule, buy rams bred outside his own district, for fear of introducing coarseness and an alteration of the established exhibition type.

An amusing incident happened at Mr. Graham's sale at Yardley near Birmingham, at which I was present. Mr. Graham had a reputation as a Shropshire sheep-breeder; though not actually farming in the county, his land was not unsuitable, and, on one occasion, I believe, he won the first prize for a shearling ram at the show of the Royal Agricultural Society of England.

I noticed a very non-agricultural individual in a top hat, who tried to get into conversation with me and who succeeded in getting a luncheon ticket gratis. These sale luncheons were at the time very bountiful spreads, including plenty of champagne, and the man under my observation made a very hearty meal. Short speeches and toasts always follow, but an adjournment is quickly made to the sale tent, before the evaporation of the effects of the hospitality. It is the custom for a glove to be passed round to collect subscriptions for the shepherd, during the progress of the sale, and on this occasion two young fellows undertook the duty of collectors. The man, who had done himself so well at Mr. Graham's expense, was evidently not buying or even making bids, and to each of the collectors he said he had already contributed to the other. Being suspicious they compared notes, and found that he had made the same excuse to both. Such meanness after the hospitality he had received was intolerable; shouting, "He's a Welsher," they lifted him bodily, protesting and struggling, rushed him out of the tent into a neighbouring field, and cast him into a dirty pond covered with green and slimy duckweed! A miserable object he scrambled out, for the pond was shallow, and took his dishevelled and bedraggled presence away as fast as he could limp along, amid the laughter and jeers of the crowd.

The Hampshire Down ram sales in the palmy days of farming were organized upon the same scale of liberality, and while the sale was proceeding steam was kept up by handing round boxes of sixpenny cigars, and brandy and water in buckets. It is, of course, good policy to keep a company of buyers in good humour, but I think it has long since been recognized that hospitality was carried a little too far in those times of prosperity, and, in these degenerate if more business-like days, extravagance is much less evident, though there is a hearty welcome and abundance for all.

Agricultural shows under favourable weather conditions are always popular and well-attended. The large exhibitions of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, the Bath and West of England, and the Royal Counties, especially attract immense crowds; much business in novel implements, machinery, seeds, and artificial fertilizers, was done when times were good, and the towns in which the shows are held benefit by a large increase in general trade. The weather, however, is the arbiter as to the attendance, upon which the financial result of the show depends.

In 1879, the last of the miserable decade that ruined thousands of farmers all over the country with almost continuous wet seasons, poor crops, and wretched prices, the Royal Agricultural Society held its show at Kilburn. The ground had been carefully prepared and adapted for the great show with the usual liberal outlay; the work for next year's show always commencing as soon as the show of the current year is over; but the site was situated on the stiff London clay, and, after weeks of summer rains and the traffic caused by collecting the heavy engines and machinery and the materials used in the construction of the sheds and buildings, the ground was churned into a quagmire of clay and water, so that in places it was impassable, and some of the exhibits were isolated. Thousands of wattled hurdles were purchased in Hampshire, and laid flat on the mud along the main routes to the tents and sheds, but they were quickly trodden in out of sight. Many ponderous engines were bogged on their way to their appointed places; nothing could move them, and they remained looking like derelict wrecks, plastered with mud, sunk unevenly above the axles of their wheels.

I attended the show and shall never forget the scene of disaster. One afternoon the Prince of Wales—the late King Edward—and a Royal party made a gallant attempt, in carriages, to see the principal exhibits, and succeeded, by following a carefully selected and guarded route. The crowd was dense by the side of the track, and people were making a harvest by letting out chairs to stand on, so as to get a view of the procession, with cries of, "'Ere you are, sir; 'ere you are, warranted not to sink in more than a mile!" Outside the show-yard, too, the streets were lined with long rows of nondescripts, scraping the adhesive clay off the shoes of the people leaving the show.

I had a pocket of my hops on exhibition entered in the Worcester class, and had great difficulty in getting near it. I found the shed at last, deserted and surrounded by water, with a pool below the benches on which the hops were staged. My pocket was sold straight from the show-yard, and when my factor sent in the account, I found that the pocket had gained no less than seventeen pounds from the damp to which it had been subjected since it left my premises, about ten days previously; hops, at that time, were worth about 1s. a pound, so that the increased value more than balanced all expenses.

A story is told of Tennyson at the Royal Counties show at Guildford. Accompanied by a lady and child he was walking round the exhibits, closely followed by an ardent admirer, anxious to catch any flights of fancy that might fall from his lips. Time passed, and the poet showed no signs of inspiration until the party approached a refreshment tent; then, to the lady he said, to the astonishment of the follower, "Just look after this child a minute while I go and get a glass of beer!" I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, but I tell the tale as 'twas told to me.

It is surprising how long farm implements will last if kept in the dry and repaired when necessary. I remember a waggon at Alton in the seventies, which bore the name of the original owner and the date 1795; it was still in use. When I decided to give up farming, or rather, when farming had given up me, I disposed of my stock and implements by the usual auction sale. The attraction of a pedigree herd of Jerseys, and a useful lot of horses and implements, brought a large company together, and Aldington was a lively place that day. I was talking to my son-in-law some time afterwards, and spoke with amusement about the price an old iron Cambridge roller had made, not in the least knowing who was the purchaser, until he said, "And *I was the mug* who bought it!" I believe, however, that a year or two later it fully maintained its price when valued to the next owner, and probably to-day it must be worth at least three times the money. I can trace its history for a period of fifty-three years, and I don't think it was new at the beginning.

CHAPTER XII

FARM SPECIALISTS

> "And who that knew him could forget
> The busy wrinkles round his eyes."
>
> *The Miller's Daughter.*

Many specialists, in distinct professions, visited the farm in the course of every twelve months, and each appeared at the season when his particular services were likely to be required. Among these an ancient grafter was one of the most important, and April was the month which brought him to Aldington. In January we had usually beheaded some trees that we considered not worth leaving as they were: these would be trees producing inferior and nondescript cider apples, or perry pears. And we had already cut, and laid in a shady place, half covered with soil, the young shoots of profitable sorts to furnish the grafts for converting the beheaded trees into valuable producers.

The old man's function was to prepare the grafts, and unite them in deftly-cut notches with their new parents. His was a rosy-cheeked and many-wrinkled face, reminding one of an apple stored all the winter, and, in his brown velveteen coat, with immense pockets, he made a notable figure. He loved a chat and was always happy and communicative, and his arrival seemed as much a herald of spring as that of the welcome cuckoo. He was paid "by the piece," "three-halfpence a graft and cider," quantity not specified, but an important part of the bargain because of a superstition that grafts "unwetted" would not thrive! Some of these large trees would have ten or more limbs requiring separate grafting, and therefore they earned him a considerable sum, but it is surprising how soon they make a new head, come into bearing, and repay with interest the cost of the work.

He was a thoughtful old man and a moralist. I can see him now, standing with his snuff-box open ready in his hand, and saying very solemnly, "I often thinks as an apple-tree is very similar to a child, for you know, sir, we're told to train up a child in the way he shall go, and when he is old he will not dēpart therefrom." He then refreshed himself with a mighty pinch of snuff, closing his box with a snap that emphasized his air of complete conviction.

I think the sheep-dipper was one of the early arrivals. He brings with him an apparatus which provides a bath, and a kind of gangway, rising at an angle from it, upon which the sheep can stand after immersion, to allow the superfluous liquid to find its way back into the bath; each sheep is lifted by two men into the bath containing insecticide, and has an interval for dripping before it rejoins the flock. In the days when Viper was young, he was introduced to the process and given a dip himself, much to his disgust; but that was the only time, for ever afterwards no sooner did the sheep-dipper and his weird-looking apparatus appear at night, in readiness for the performance on the morrow, than Viper remembered his undignified experience, and, before even the overture of the play commenced, vanished for the day. Nobody saw him go, or knew where he went, but it was useless to call or whistle, he was nowhere to be found.

I believe the active ingredient of the dip was a preparation of arsenic, and upon one occasion I lost several sheep after the dipping, presumably from arsenical poisoning absorbed through the skin. I met the dipper a few days later, and he said with a beaming face that he had "given 'em summat," meaning the parasites. His smiles disappeared when I told him the result, and that the remedy had proved more fatal than the disease. After this experience I used a more scientific dip which was quite as effective and without the element of danger to the sheep.

Entries are to be found in the old parish records of sums paid and chargeable to the parish for killing " woonts" (moles), but later private enterprise was alone responsible. A mole-catcher had been employed throughout the whole of my predecessor's time at Aldington, with a yearly remuneration of 12s. On my arrival he called and asked me to forward the account for the last year to his employer; it ran as follows: " To dastroyin thay woonts, 12s." The man hoped that I should continue the arrangement, but, as I had not seen a mole or a mole-hill on the farm, I told him I would wait, and would send for him if I found them troublesome. As a matter of fact I never saw a mole, or heard of one on my land, throughout the twenty-eight years of my occupation.

Rat-catchers are necessary when rats are very numerous, but rats appear to be very capricious, abounding in some seasons and scarce in others. My particular rat-catcher was not a very highly evolved specimen of humanity; he was thin and hungry-looking with an angular face, bearing a strong resemblance to the creatures against whom he waged warfare; he had a wandering, restless and furtive expression, and appeared to be perpetually on the lookout for his prey, or for manifestations of their cunning and other evil characteristics in the humanity with which he came in contact. His terms were, " no cure, no pay," which impressed one with his confidence in his own remedies; but these were profound secrets, and I had to be content with the assurance that he used nothing harmful to man or domestic animals. He was certainly successful, and effectually cleared the ricks and buildings at one of my outlying places previously badly infested; no dead rats were ever found, but all disappeared very soon after I engaged him.

It is well known that rats will unexpectedly desert quarters which they have occupied for a long time, and travel in large bodies to a new locality. An old man told me that, in walking by the brook-side footpath from Aldington to Badsey, he once encountered one of these armies; they looked so threatening and were in such numbers, that he had to turn aside to allow them to pass, as they showed no signs of giving way for him.

One morning my bailiff came in to say that a bean-rick had suddenly been taken possession of by an immense number of rats, where shortly before not one could have been found. A man going to the rick-yard quite early had seen the roof of the rick black with them; they were apparently drinking the dew hanging in drops on the straws of the thatch. They were so close together, "so thick," as he expressed it, that one was killed by a stone thrown "into the brown" of them. We sent for the thrashing machine a day or two later, and killed over seventy, and many escaped. Every dead rat was plastered with mud underneath, especially on their tails, and it was evident that they had only just arrived when first seen, and had travelled some distance, probably the evening before, along the clayey overhanging bank of the brook.

We always had great numbers of water-rats about the brook; they are no relation of the land-rat, having blunter noses, shorter tails, and very soft fur. They have not the loathsome appearance of the land-rat, and live, almost entirely, on water-weeds, rushes, and other vegetable matter. It is pretty to see them swimming across a stream; they dive when alarmed, and remain out of sight a long time; they never leave the water or the bank, and are quite innocent of depredations on corn.

In some counties, but not so far as I am aware in Worcestershire, one of the harmless snappers up of unconsidered trifles is the truffle-hunter. At Alton, in Hampshire, one of these men appeared in summer; he carried an implement like a short-handled thistle spud, but with a much longer blade, similar to that of a small spade but narrower; he was accompanied by a frisky little Frenchified dog, unlike any dog one commonly sees, and very alert. The hunting ground was beneath the overhanging branches of beech-trees, growing on a chalky soil; the man encouraged the dog by voice to hunt the surface of the land regularly over; when the dog scented the truffles underneath, he began to scratch, whereupon the implement came into use, and they were soon secured. I have since been sorry that I did not interview this truffle-hunter as to his methods and as to his dog, for I believe he is no longer to be seen in his old haunts. But I did get a pound or two to try, and was disappointed by the absence of flavour. I have since read that the English truffle is considered very inferior to the French, which is used in making *pâté de foie gras*.

The wool-stapler makes his rounds as soon as shearing is completed; his first call is to examine the fleeces, and if a deal results a second visit follows for weighing and packing. He is of course well up in market values, probably receiving a telegram every morning, when trade is active, from the great wool-trade centre, Bradford. He is not unwilling to give a special price for quality, but will sometimes stipulate for secrecy as to the sum, because farmers, naturally, compare notes, and everyone thinks himself entitled to the top price no matter how inferior or badly washed his wool may be. The Bradford stapler has the northern method of speech, which sounds unfamiliar in the midland and southern counties, but it is not so cryptic as that of the Scottish wool trade. The following colloquy is reported as having passed between two Scots over a deal in woollen cloth.

Buyer. " 'Oo ?"
Seller. " Ay, 'oo."
Buyer. " A' 'oo ?"
Seller. " Ay, a' 'oo."
Buyer. " A' *a* 'oo ?"
Seller. " Ay, a' *a* 'oo."

Which, being interpreted, is: " Wool ?"—" Yes, wool." " All wool ?"—" Yes, all wool." " All one wool ?"—" Yes, all one wool."

When the stapler arrives for the weighing he brings his steelyards and sheets; the wool is trod into the sheets, sewn up, and each sheet weighed separately, an allowance being made for "tare" (the weight of the sheet), and for "draught" (½ a pound in each tod, or 28 pounds). This last is a survival of the old method of weighing wool, when only enough fleeces were weighed at a time on the farmer's small machine to come to a tod as nearly as possible. Buyers did not recognize anything but level pounds (no quarters or halves), and consequently they got on the average half a pound over the tod at each separate weighing, gratis.

Owing to the immense importations of Australian wool, the price of English, which at one time was half-a-crown a pound, fell to the miserable figure of sevenpence or thereabouts. When I was in Lincolnshire, the tenant of the farm where I was a pupil clipped 14 pounds each from 200 "hoggs" (yearling sheep), which at 2s. 6d. per pound produced 35s. per sheep, equal to £350, so the fall of three-quarters of the value was a serious loss.

A story is told of a cunning wool buyer in the dim past weighing up wool on an upper floor of some farm premises. As the fleeces passed the machine they were thrown down an opening to the floor beneath in readiness for packing. The pile of wool upstairs had been there some time, and was full of rats. As the fleeces were moved a rat would sometimes rush out trying to escape. No farm labourer can resist a rat hunt, so the buyer being left alone beside the still unmoved fleeces, whenever a rat appeared, and the men scattered in every direction in pursuit, he took the opportunity to kick a few fleeces unweighed down the opening. When the owner came to reckon the quantity the buyer should have had, and compared it with the weight, the fraud was discovered, and the deficiency had to be made good.

I heard of a Hampshire farmer whose wife was anxious for a drawing-room to be added to an inadequate farm-house, and the tenant with some difficulty persuaded the landlord to make the alteration. When the work was complete the farmer expressed the great satisfaction of his wife and himself with the addition, and the landlord was anxious to see the new room. Every time he suggested a day, the farmer objected that it would be inconvenient to his wife, or that he himself would be away from home. Time went on, and the landlord, finding it impossible to arrange a day that was not objected to, made a surprise visit, when shooting over the farm. The farmer protested as to the inconvenience, but the owner insisted, and was conducted to the new drawing-room. The door was thrown open, and the room was seen to be stacked from floor to ceiling with wool, without a stick of furniture in the place!

The veterinary surgeon is a necessary, but not very welcome visitor, for, of course, his attendance means disease or accident to the stock. He is not often mistaken in his diagnosis, though his patient cannot detail his symptoms, or point to the position of the trouble. But the vet is a man to be dispensed with as long as possible when epidemics, like swine fever or foot and mouth disease, are raging in the neighbourhood, because he may be a Government Inspector at such times, and there is great danger to healthy stock if he has been officially employed shortly before on an inspection. We had very little disease at Aldington, being off the highroad, but we had one bad attack of foot and mouth disease which I always thought was brought by a veterinary surgeon. The complaint went all through my dairy cows and fattening bullocks, and soon reduced them to lean beasts, but it was surprising how quickly they picked up again in flesh and resumed their normal appearance. It was curious to notice that, with the cows standing side by side in the sheds, the disease would attack one and miss the next two perhaps, then attack two and miss one, and so on; doubtless it was a matter of predisposition on the part of those affected.

The veterinary lecturer at Cirencester College told me that during the cattle plague in the sixties he had a coat well worth £50 to any veterinary surgeon, so impregnated was it with the infection. This man was fond of scoring off the students, and had a habit at the commencement of each lecture of holding a short *vivâ voce* examination on the subject of the last. I remember when the tables were turned upon him by a ready-witted student. The lecturer, who was a superior veterinary surgeon, detailed a whole catalogue of exaggerated symptoms exhibited by an imaginary horse, and selecting his victim added, with a chuckle, " Now, Mr. K., perhaps you will kindly tell us what treatment you would adopt under these circumstances ?" K. was not a very diligent student, and the lecturer expected a display of ignorance, but his anticipated triumph was cut short by the reply: " Well, if I had a horse as bad as all that *I* should send for the vet." The lecturer expostulated, but could get nothing further out of K., and was forced to recognize that the general laugh which followed was against himself.

At a *post-mortem*, however, he was more successful in his choice of a butt. A dead horse with organs exposed was the object before the class, and the lecturer was asking questions as to their identification. " Now, Mr. Jones, perhaps you will show us where his lungs are ?" Jones made an unsuccessful search. " Well, can we see where his heart is ?" and so on—all failures. Finally and scornfully, " Well, perhaps you can show the gentlemen where his tail is !"

The village thatcher, Obadiah B., was an ancient, but efficient workman when engaged upon cottages or farm buildings, for ricks require only a comparatively temporary treatment. He was paid by the " square " of 100 feet, and, although he was " no scholard," and never used a tape, he was quite capable of checking by some method I could never fathom my own measurements with it. The finishing touches to his work were adjusted with the skill of an artist and the accuracy of a mathematician; and a beautiful bordering of " buckles " in an elaborate pattern of angles and crosses—" Fantykes " (Van Dycks), his hard-working daughter Sally called them —completed the job. He " reckoned " that each thatching would last at least twenty years, and being well stricken in years, or " getting-up-along " as they say in Hampshire, he would add gloomily, " *I* shall never do it no more." He was a true prophet, for on every building he thatched for me the work outlived him, and even after the lapse of thirty years is not completely worn out.

Passing him and his son in the village street, outside his house, when he was packing fruit for market, I heard him, his voice raised for my benefit, thus admonishing his son who was casually using some of the newer hampers: " Allus wear out the old, fust." But I must not attribute to his son the unfilial retort which another youth made under similar circumstances, when told to fetch some more hampers from a shed some distance away: " No, father, *you* fetch them, allus wear out the old fust, you know."

Occasional visitors come with goods for sale in quest of orders, and some are very persistent and difficult to get rid of. A man professing to sell some artificial fertilizer called upon me with a small tin sample box, containing a mixture which emitted a most villainous odour. He sniffed with appreciation at the compound, probably consisting of some nitrogenous material such as wool treated with sulphuric or hydrochloric acid, and began his address. He had not gone far before I remembered a story of a similar person in Hampshire. This man had called upon the leading farmers, and offered them a bargain, explaining that some trucks of artificial manure that he had consigned to Walton Station had been sent by mistake to Alton. He sold many tons in this way without any guarantee as to the analysis, but the buyers found on using it that it was worthless. The seller tried his game on again the following year, without success. One farmer whom he followed from the farm-house to a turnip-field went so far as to show him his hunting-crop, and pointing to the field gate at the same time, intimated that if he did not with all speed place himself outside the latter, he would make unpleasant acquaintance with the former. So now when my caller mentioned a truck of the manure which had come by mistake to Evesham Station, though consigned to Evershot in Somerset, my suspicions were confirmed, and when I innocently remarked, "I think I remember that truck, didn't it go to Alton once in mistake for Walton?" his countenance fell, and he wished me "good-morning" in a hurry.

Hurdles in Worcestershire are generally made of "withy" (willow), and it is interesting to watch the hurdle-maker at work. The poles have first to be peeled, which can be done by unskilled labour, the pole being fixed in an improvised upright vice made from the same material. Then comes the skilled man, who cuts the poles into suitable lengths, and splits the pieces into the correct widths. Next with an axe he trims off the rough edges, shapes the ends of the rails, and pierces the uprights with a centre-bit. Then he completes the mortise in a moment with a chisel, the rails being laid in position as guides to the size of the apertures. The rails are then driven home into the mortise holes, and he skips backwards and forwards, over the hurdle flat on the ground, as he nails the rails to the heads; two pieces, in the form of a V reversed, connect the rails and keep them in place.

In counties where hazel is grown in the coppices, a wattled or "flake" hurdle is the favourite, and they afford much more shelter to sheep in the fold than the open withy hurdle, but, being more lightly made, they require stakes and "shackles" to keep them in position. The hazel hurdle-maker may be seen in the coppice surrounded by his material and the clean fresh stacks of the work completed. The process of manufacture differs from that of the open-railed hurdle: he has an upright framework fixed to the ground with holes bored at the exact places for the vertical pieces, and indicating the correct length of the hurdle, when finished. The horizontal pieces or rods are comparatively slender and easily twisted, and so can be bent back where they reach the outside uprights, and they are interlaced with the others in basket-making fashion. At this stage the hurdle presents an unfinished appearance, with the ends of the horizontal rods protruding from the face of the hurdle. Then the maker with a special narrow and exceedingly sharp hatchet chops off at one blow each of the projecting ends, with admirable accuracy, never missing his aim or exceeding the exact degree of strength necessary to sever the superfluous bit without injuring the hurdle itself. The hurdle-maker is paid at a price per dozen, and he earns and deserves "good money."

The art of making wattled hurdles is passed on and carried down from father to son for generations; the hurdle-maker is usually a cheery man and receives a gracious welcome from the missus and the maids when he calls at the farm-house, often emphasized by a pint of home-brewed. He combines the accuracy of the draughtsman with the delicate touch of the accomplished lawn-tennis player. His exits and his entrances from and to the scene of his labours are made in the remote mysterious surroundings of the seldom-trodden woods; overhead is the brilliant blue of the clear spring sky; the sunshine lights up the quiet hazel tones of his simple materials, his highly finished work, and his heaps of clean fresh chips; and his stage is the newly cut coppice, carpeted with primroses and wild hyacinths. I have never seen a representation of this charming scene, and I commend the subject to the country-loving artist as full of interest and colour, and as a theme of natural beauty.

Our blacksmith came twice a week to the village when work was still plentiful in the early days of my farming, and I was not yet the only practical farmer in the place. I need not describe the forge: it has been sung by Longfellow, made music of by Handel, and painted by Morland; everybody knows its gleaming red-hot iron, its cascades of sparks, and the melodious clank of the heavy hammer as it falls upon the impressionable metal. In all pursuits which entail the use of an open fire at night, its fascination attracts both busy and idle villagers, and more especially in winter it becomes a centre for local gossip. At that season the time-honoured gossip corner, close to the Manor gate, was deserted for the warmth and action of the forge. Blacksmiths, like other specialists, vary, and the difference may be expressed as that between the man who fits the shoe to the hoof, and the man who fits the hoof to the shoe—in other words, the workman and the sloven. Doubtless many a slum-housed artisan in the big town, driven from his country home by the flood of unfair foreign competition, looks back with longing to the bright old cottage garden of his youth and in his dreams hears the music of the forge, sees the blazing fire, and sniffs the pungency of scorching hoof.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DAIRY—CATTLE—SHEEP—LAMBS—PIGS—POULTRY

" And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,
We heard behind the woodbine veil
The milk that bubbled in the pail,
And buzzings of the honied hours."
In Memoriam.

My farm had the reputation of being a good cheese farm, but a bad butter farm; in spite, however, of this tradition I determined to establish a pedigree Jersey herd for butter-making. For early in my occupation I had abandoned the cheese manufacture of my predecessor and later the production of unprofitable beef. My wife attended various lectures and demonstrations and was soon able to prove that the bad character of the farm for this purpose was not justified. Within a few years she covered one wall of the dairy with prize cards won at all the leading shows, and found a ready market for the produce, chiefly by parcel post to friends. The butter, although it commanded rather a better price than ordinary quality, was considered not only by them but by the villagers more economical, as owing to its solidity and freedom from butter milk, it would keep good indefinitely, and " went much further."

The cream from my Jerseys was so thick that the cream crock could be lifted up by the wooden spoon used for stirring, by merely plunging it into the crock full of cream and raising it, without touching the crock in any other way. With fifteen cows and heifers in milk on an average, the Jerseys brought me in quite £300 a year in butter and cream, without considering the value of the calves, and of the skim-milk for the pigs, and they were worth a good deal besides from the æsthetic point of view. I think that the word " dainty " describes the Jersey better than any other adjective; their beautiful lines and colouring in all shades of fawn and silver grey make them a continual delight to behold. After all, however, the shorthorn is a magnificent creature; they, too, have their æsthetic side; the outline is more robust, their colouring more pronounced, and I think that "stately" is the best description to apply to their distinguished bearing.

At Worcester, on market days, a great deal of butter is brought in by the country people and retailed in the Market Hall, and many of these farmers' wives and daughters have regular customers, who come each week for their supply. On one occasion when the inspector of weights and measures was making a surprise visit, and testing the weights of the goods on offer, a man, standing near a stall where only one pound of butter was left unsold, noticed that as soon as the owner became aware of the inspector's entrance, she slipped two half-crowns into the pat, obliterating the marks where they had been inserted. She was evidently aware that the butter was not full weight, but with the addition it satisfied the inspector's test, the two half-crowns just balancing the one ounce short. No sooner was he gone than the spectator came forward to buy the butter. She guessed that he had seen the trick, and dared not refuse to sell, although she tried hard to avoid doing so; so the cunning buyer walked off with fifteen ounces of butter worth 1s. 2d., and 5s. in silver for his outlay of 1s. 3d.

In farm-houses where old-fashioned ways of butter-making are still followed, and the thermometer is ignored, it happens sometimes that after some hours' churning the butter does not "come." The traditional remedy is then tried of introducing one or two half-crowns into the churn, partly, I think, as a kind of charm, and partly with the idea of what is called "cutting the curd." The remedy is certainly sometimes successful, probably the coins set up a new movement in the rotating cream, which causes an almost immediate appearance of the butter.

On the outside of the framework of the windows in some of these old places, the word "dairy" or "cheese-room" may still be seen, painted or incised. This is a survival from the days of the window tax, and was necessary to claim the exemption which these rooms as places of business enjoyed by law.

My former tutor, the late vicar of Old Basing in Hampshire, decided to keep a cow on his glebe, and consulted the old parish clerk as to the kind of cow he would recommend. The old man was the oracle of the village on all matters secular as well as those connected with his calling. "Well," he said, "what you wants is a nice pretty little cow, not a great big beast as'll stand a-looking and a-staring at you all day long." The vicar followed his advice, avoided the stony regard of an unintelligent animal, and purchased a charming little tender-eyed Brittany, which was quite an ornament to his meadow.

People were very shy of American beef when first imported but, being lower in price than English it was bought by those who were willing to sacrifice quality to cheapness. It was said that the most inferior English was sold under the name of American, the best of the American doing duty for medium quality English. I remember seeing a very ancient and poverty-stricken cow knocked down to a Birmingham dealer, who exclaimed exultingly as the hammer fell, "I'll make 'em some 'Merican biff in Brummagem this week."

The neglected and overgrown hedges, now so often seen on what was formerly good wheat-growing land, have a useful side as shelter when surrounding pasture. In the bitter winds which often occur in May, when the cattle are first turned out after a winter in the yards well littered with clean straw, they can be seen on the southern side protected from the blast. Referring to the May blossom of the white-thorn, an old proverb says, with a faulty rhyme:

> "May come early or May come late
> 'Tis sure to make the old cow quake."

May Day has always been the customary date for turning out cattle to grass, but people forget that old May Day was nearly a fortnight later, which makes a great difference as to warmth and keep at that time of year.

With changes of dates and times old customs and sayings lose their force. Under the "daylight saving" arrangement we should alter, "Rain before seven, fine before eleven," to "Rain before eight, fine before twelve," which spoils the rhyme. And "Between one and two, you'll see what the day means to do," into, "Between two and three, you'll see what the day means to be."

A few years ago, when *Antony and Cleopatra* was reproduced at a London theatre by an eminent actor-manager, it was reported that his mind was much exercised over the lines referring to the flight of Pompey's galley:

> "The breese upon her, like a cow in June,
> Hoists sails and flies."

It was suggested that for "cow," the correct reading should be "crow," who might very well spread her wings to the breeze and fly. The difficulty was caused by the word "breese" (the gad-fly)—no doubt presumed to be an archaic spelling of "breeze." Shakespeare knew all about farming, as about nearly everything else, and a year on a farm would illustrate many of his allusions which the ordinary reader finds somewhat cryptic; anyone who has seen the terrified stampede of cattle with their tails erect when attacked by the gad-fly, will recognize the force of the simile. The gad-fly pierces the skin of the animal, laying its eggs beneath, just as the ichneumon makes use of a caterpillar to provide a host for its progeny. No doubt the operation is a painful one, but the caterpillar may survive, even into its chrysalis stage, and the cow in due time is relieved, after an uncomfortable experience, by the exit of the maggot or fly.

A branch of the Roman road, Ryknield Street, commonly called Buckle Street, leaving the former near Bidford-on-Avon and running over the Cotswolds via Weston Subedge, was known in former times as Buggilde or Buggeld Street, derived possibly from the Latin *buculus*, a young bullock. No doubt vast herds of cattle traversed the road from the vale to the hills, or vice versa, according to the abundance of keep and the time of year. Similar roads in Dorset and Wiltshire are still known as "ox droves," and in the former county, at least, both young heifers and bullocks are known as "bullicks."

Cattle are subject to all manner of disorders which, though puzzling to the owner to diagnose, are not as a rule beyond the skill of a good veterinary surgeon to alleviate; but there are also accidents which are much more annoying, being impossible to foresee. I had occasional losses from the latter causes: once in the night when a cow was thrown on her back into a deep brick manger; and once when a small piece of sacking, part of a decorticated cotton-cake bag, was somehow mixed in with the food, and induced internal inflammation.

It is a difficult matter for a farmer when selling fat cattle direct to the butcher, to compete with him in a correct estimate of the weight, and it is therefore advisable to sell at a price per pound of the dead weight when dressed; this, however, is not always feasible, and a very close estimate can be arrived at by measurement of the girth and length of the live animal, following rules laid down in the handbooks on the subject of fat stock. It is a mistake to suppose that the fattening of stock is a profitable undertaking *per se*. On all arable farms there is a certain amount of food, hay, straw, chaff, roots, etc., which must be consumed on the premises for the sake of keeping up the fertility of the land, but I believe that only under very exceptional circumstances can a shilling's-worth of food and attendance be converted into a shilling's-worth of meat, so that if in the future the price of corn is to fall back into anything approaching pre-war values, the corn crops, as well as the intermediate green crops, which are only a means for producing corn, must be discontinued, and the land will again become inferior pasture. Old-fashioned farmers recognized the absence of direct profit in the winter of fattening cattle especially on the produce of arable land, and the saying is well known that, "the man who fattens many bullocks never wants much paper on which to make his will."

There are few pleasanter sights about farm premises than to see, as the short winter day is drawing to an end, and the twilight is stealing around the ricks and buildings, a nicely sheltered yard full of contented cattle deeply bedded down in clean bright wheat straw, and settling themselves comfortably for the night; and, when one pulls the bed-clothes up to one's ears, one can go to sleep thinking happily that they too are enjoying a refreshing sleep. Cattle and sheep can stand severe cold, if they are sheltered from bitter winds and have dry quarters in which to lie; even lambs are none the worse for coming into the world in a snow-covered pasture; and an opened stable window without a draught will often cure a horse of a long-standing chronic cough. It was pitiful in the early days of the war to see the Indian troops with their mountain batteries at Ashurst, near Lyndhurst, in the New Forest, the mules up to their knees and hocks in black mud, owing to the unfortunate selection of an unsound site for the camp.

A "deadly man for ship"—one of those expressions not uncommon in Worcestershire, on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle—signifies a celebrated sheep breeder; the word "deadly," in this sense, is akin to the Hampshire and Dorset "terrible," or, "turrble," as a term of admiration or the appreciation of excellence; but there are occasions even in the most carefully tended flocks where accidents cannot be anticipated. Such an event occurred to a Cotswold ram, which after washing was placed in an orchard near my house to dry before shearing. The ram had an immense fleece on him, nineteen pounds as it afterwards proved, and the wool round the neck was somewhat ragged. As he lay asleep with his head turned round and muzzle pointing backwards, some little movement caused his head to become entangled in the loose wool, and he was found hanged in his own fleece.

I was watching, with my bailiff, a splendid lot of lambs fat and ready for the butcher; two of them were having a game—walking backwards from each other, and suddenly rushing together like two knights in a medieval tournament, their heads meeting with a concussion and a resounding smack—when one instantly fell to the ground with a broken neck. Had no one been present the meat would have been worthless, but my man was equal to the occasion, and, borrowing my pocket knife, produced the flow of blood necessary to render the meat fit for human food. My villagers had a feast that week, and my own table was graced by an excellent joint of real English lamb. Of course we never attempted to consume any of the meat from animals which had been killed when suffering from a doubtful complaint, though some people are by no means particular in this matter.

A doctor told me that when attending a case at a farmhouse he was invited to join the family at their midday meal, and was surprised to see a nice fore-quarter of lamb on the table. His host gave him an ample helping, and he had just made a beginning with it and the mint sauce, green peas, and new potatoes, when the founder of the feast announced by way of excusing the indulgence in such a luxury: " This un, you know was a bit casualty, so we thought it better to make sure of un." My informant told me that then and there his appetite completely failed, and, to the dismay of his host he had to relinquish his knife and fork.

It is always policy to kill a sheep to save its life, as the saying is, and the way to make the most of it is to send any fat animal, which is off its feed and looking somewhat thoughtful, to the butcher at once. He knows quite well whether the sheep is fit for food, and if he decides against it, all one expects is the value of the skin. But people are very shy of buying meat about which they have any misgiving, and my butcher once told me not to send him an "emergency sheep" *in one of my own carts*, but to ask him to fetch it himself: "It's like this," he explained, "when a customer comes in for a nice joint of mutton, if he is a near neighbour, he will perhaps add, 'I would rather not have a bit of the sheep that came in a day or two ago in one of Mr. S.'s carts'!"

It was always cheering in February, "fill dyke, be it black or be it white," on a dark morning, to hear the young lambs and their mothers calling to each other in the orchards, where there is some grass all the year round under the shelter of the apple trees; or when a spring-like morning appears, about the time of St. Valentine's Day, and the thrushes are singing love-songs to their mates, and the first brimstone butterfly has dared to leave his winter seclusion for the fickle sunshine, to realize that Spring is coming, and the active work of the farm is about to recommence. There is a superstition that when the master sees the firstling of the flock, if its head is turned towards him, good luck for the year will follow, but it is most unlucky if its head is turned away.

After the disastrous wet season of 1879 immense losses ensued from the prevalence of the fatal liver rot; many thousands of sheep were sold at the auctions for 3s. or 4s. apiece, and sound mutton was exceedingly scarce and dear. It was represented to a very august personage, that if the people could be induced to forgo the consumption of lamb, these in due course would grow into sheep, and the price of mutton would be reduced. Accordingly an order was issued forbidding the appearance of lamb on the Court tables. It had not occurred to the proposer of this scheme that a scarcity of food for the developing lambs would result, nor was it understood that the producers of fat lambs make special cropping arrangements for their keep, with the object of clearing out their stock about Easter, in time to plough the ground, and follow the roots where the ewes and lambs have been feeding, with barley. The "classes" copied the example of the

Court, as in duty bound, and the demand fell to zero. But the lambs had to be sold for the reasons mentioned, and, in the absence of the usual demand, the unfortunate producers offered them at almost any price. The miners and the pottery workers in Staffordshire were not so loyal as the "classes"; they welcomed the unusual opportunity of buying early lamb at 9d. a pound, and trains composed entirely of trucks full of lambs from the south of England to the Midlands supplied them abundantly.

The edict, when its effect was apparent, was therefore revoked, but it was too late, the lambs were gone, and as everybody was hungry for his usual Easter lamb, the demand was immense, and the price rose in proportion. I had thirty or forty lambs intended for the Easter markets, and had, with great difficulty and the sacrifice of grass which should have stood for hay, managed to keep them on, scarcely knowing what to do with them. But the sudden demand arose just in time, and I sent them to the Alcester auction sale, where buyers from Birmingham and the neighbourhood attend in large numbers. A capital sale resulted, the price going as high as 60s., in those days a big figure for lambs about four months old. I was so pleased with the result and my deliverance from the dilemma, that, passing through the town on my way home, and spying an old Worcester china cup and saucer, and a bowl of the same, all with the rare square mark, I invested some of my plunder in what time has proved an excellent speculation, and my cabinet is still decorated with these mementoes, which I never see without calling to mind the story of the lamb edict and its result.

During the Great War some controlling wiseacre evolved precisely the same scheme for bringing about an imaginary increase in the supply of mutton, by prohibiting the slaughter of any lambs until June. The Dorset breeders, who buy in ewes at high prices for the special production of early lamb—the lambs of this breed are born in October and November—were more particularly affected, and the absurdity of the prohibition having been later represented to the authorities, the order was withdrawn, though not before great loss and difficulty were inflicted upon the unfortunate producers. It goes to prove the necessity of the administration of such matters by competent men, and how easily apparently sound theory in inexperienced hands may conflict with economical practice.

Of late years the competition of the importations of New Zealand lamb has reduced the price of English lamb to an unremunerative level. This thin dry stuff bears about the same resemblance to real fat home-grown lamb, as do the proverbial chalk and cheese to each other; but it is good enough for the restaurants and eating-houses; and the consumer who lacks the critical faculty of the connoisseur in such matters, devours his "Canterbury" lamb, well disguised with mint sauce, in sublime ignorance, and, apparently, without missing the succulence of the real article—convinced as he is that it was produced in the neighbourhood of the cathedral city of the same name, and unaware of the existence of such a place as Canterbury in New Zealand, or that the name, if not exactly a fraud, is calculated to mislead. Doubtless it is the mint sauce that satisfies the uncritical palate. Just as the boy who, when asked after a treat of oysters how he liked them, said with gusto, "The oysters was good, but the vinegar and pepper was *de*licious!"

It is well known that there is a tendency among men in charge of special kinds of domestic animals gradually to approximate to them in appearance, and we are told that men sometimes gradually acquire a resemblance to men they admire. I knew a pedigree-pig herdsman, very successful in the show-ring, who was curiously like his charges, and I had at least two shepherds whose profiles were extraordinarily sheepish—though not in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Such an appearance confers a singularly simple expression. It must have been a man whose character justified such a facial peculiarity, who, having to bring the flock of one of my neighbours over a railway crossing between two of his fields, neglected to open the further gate first, drove the sheep on to the rails, and proceeded to do so, only to find the sheep, in the meantime, had wandered down the line. Before he could collect them a train dashed into them, and many were killed and others injured. The railway company not only repudiated all liability, but sent in a counterclaim for damage to their engine !

But the tables were turned morally, if not actually, by a friend of mine, who certainly scored off a railway company. My friend's waggon, with two horses and a load of hay, was passing over a level crossing on his land, when the London express came into view slinging downhill in all the majesty of triumphant speed, but far enough away to be brought up in time, ignominiously and abruptly. The railway company wrote my friend a letter of remonstrance suggestive of pains and penalties, and telling him that his waggoner should have made sure of the safety of crossing before attempting it—not an easy thing to do at this particular place. My friend replied that his right of way existed centuries before the railway was dreamed of, that the crossing was a concession for the company's convenience, it had saved the expense of a bridge, and that his hay was an urgent matter in view of the weather ; and that uninterrupted harvesting was of more importance than the punctuality of their passengers.

I have sometimes passed through a remote village on a Sunday where the obsequies of a pig were to be seen in full view from the road; these were usually places where the church was in an adjoining mother-parish, and of course there are times when, for reasons of health or perhaps more correctly ill-health, it is impossible to defer the ceremony. As a rule, I should imagine that greater privacy is sought, at any rate so far as the public point of view is concerned. One remembers the story of the man doing some Sunday carpentering; his wife expostulated with him as a Sabbath breaker ; he replied that in driving in the nails he could not help making some noise; "then why," said she, "don't you use screws ?"

An old Dorset labourer who helped with the removal of the pig-wash, and did other small jobs for successive tenants of mine at a furnished cottage on my land in Hampshire, invariably estimated the social status and resources of each new tenant by the consistency of the wash. When some rather extravagant occupiers were in possession, he reported them as, "Quite the right sort; their wash is real good, thick stuff." The villagers at Aldington did not smoke their bacon, but, as it usually hung in the kitchen not far from the big open hearth, and as the place was often full of fragrant wood smoke, the bacon acquired a pleasant suggestion of the smoked article of the southern counties. The cottagers rarely complained of the smoky state of their kitchens, consoling themselves with the saying, "'Tis better to be smoke-dried nor starred [starved with the cold] to death." Bacon naturally suggests eggs; many of the villagers kept a few fowls which sometimes strayed into my orchards; as a rule, I made no objection, but it was not pleasing, when the apples were over-ripe and dropping from the trees, to notice the destructive marks of their beaks on some extra fine Blenheim oranges.

My wife determined to take over our fowls into her own jurisdiction; hitherto they had been under my bailiff's care, and he rather resented the change as an implication on his management, until it was explained that she was anxious to undertake the poultry as a hobby. One of the carter boys was detailed to collect the eggs, as some of the hen-houses were in out-of-the-way corners of the yards and difficult to approach. My wife thought the middle-man was appropriating most of the profit; she was determined to get as directly to the consumer as possible and, among others, she arranged with the head of a large school for a weekly supply of dairy and poultry produce. All went well for a time until one day the boy, anxious to produce as many eggs as possible, as he received a royalty per dozen for collecting, discovered some nests which my man had set for hatching before he retired from the post. The boy, not recognizing this important fact, came in greatly pleased with an unusually large quantity, and it so happened that the school received the eggs from this special lot. Next morning forty eggs appeared at the boys' breakfast table, and forty boys simultaneously suffered a terrible shock on the discovery of forty incomplete chickens. The head wrote an aggrieved letter of complaint, and though my wife was by that time able to explain the matter, and regret her own loss too of forty chickens, he removed his custom to a more reliable source.

This schoolmaster was a collector of antique furniture and china, and, knowing that I was interested, he asked me to come and see some Chippendale chairs he had just acquired. It happened that some months before I had declined to buy four or five chairs that were offered at 10s. apiece. I had not then fully developed the taste for the antique, which once acquired forbids the connoisseur to refuse anything good, whether really wanted or not, and at that time there was much more choice in such matters than at the present day. The chairs were very dilapidated and I did not recognize their possibilities, but I noticed the arms of the elbow chairs were particularly good, being carved at the junction of the horizontal and vertical pieces with eagles' heads. Deciding that I did not want them I sent a dealer to the house and forgot all about the matter. The schoolmaster took me into his drawing-room, and I instantly recognized the set I had refused; they were quite transformed, nicely cleaned, lightly polished, and the seats newly covered. I duly admired them, and on inquiry found that he had purchased them in Worcester from the dealer I had sent to look at them; they cost him £5 each, and I suppose at the present time they would be worth £20 apiece at least.

I have previously mentioned old Viper as a family friend, but like all dogs he had his faults. He acquired a liking for new laid eggs and hunted the rickyard for nests in the straw. My bailiff determined to cure him; he carefully blew an egg, and filled it with a mixture of which mustard was the chief component. Viper was tempted to sample the egg, which he accepted with a great show of innocence ; the effect when he had broken the shell was electrical ; he fled with downcast tail and complete dejection, and nothing would ever induce him to touch an egg again.

The whirligig of time has indeed brought its revenge in the matter of the market value of eggs. In Worcestershire we have had to give them away at eighteen or twenty for a shilling; last (1918–1919) winter we sold some at 7s. a dozen, and many more at 5s.

CHAPTER XIV

ORCHARDS—APPLES—CIDER—PERRY

"Lo ! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow
Drops in a silent autumn night."
The Lotus-Eaters.

A curious old punning Latin line, illustrating various meanings of the word *malus*, an apple, seems appropriate, as a commencement, to writing about apples ; it is I think very little known, and too good to be forgotten. *Malo, malo, malo, malo ;* it is translated thus:

"*Malo*, I would rather be,
Malo, in an apple-tree,
Malo, than a bad boy,
Malo, in adversity."

The fruit was an important item on the Aldington Manor Farm, and when later I bought an adjoining farm of seventy acres with orcharding, and had planted nine acres of plum trees, my total fruit area amounted to about thirty acres. There was a saying in the neighbourhood which pleased me greatly, that "it was always harvest at Aldington"; it was not so much intended to signify that there was always something coming in, as to convey an impression of the constant activity and employment of labour that continued throughout the seasons without intermission, though it was true that with the diversity of my crops and stock, there was a more or less continuous return. I had a shock when an old friend in a neighbouring village spoke of me as a "pomologist," the title seemed much too distinguished, and personally I have never claimed the right to anything better than the rather pretty old title of "orchardist."

The position of an orchard is of the utmost importance; shelter is necessary, but it must be above the ordinary spring frost level of the district. I should say that no orchard should be less than 150 feet above sea-level, to be fairly safe, and 200 feet would in nearly any ordinary spring be quite secure against frost. The climate has a remarkable effect upon the colour of apples, and colour is one of the most valuable of market properties, for the ordinary town buyer is a poor judge of the merits of apples and prefers colour and size to most other considerations. Here in the south of England seven miles from the sea, in a dry and sunny climate, all apples develop a much more brilliant colour than in the moist climate of the Vale of Evesham.

I fear that very few planters of fruit trees think of following the routine which Virgil describes in his second *Georgic*, as practised by the careful orchardist, when transplanting. Dryden's translation is as follows:

> "Some peasants, not t' omit the nicest care,
> Of the same soil their nursery prepare
> With that of their plantation; lest the tree,
> Translated should not with the soil agree.
> Beside, to plant it as it was, they mark
> The heav'ns four quarters on the tender bark,
> And to the north or south restore the side,
> Which at their birth did heat or cold abide:
> So strong is custom; such effects can use
> In tender souls of pliant plants produce."

Virgil was born in the year 70 B.C., and died, age 51, in 19 B.C., so that over nineteen centuries have elapsed since these words were written; as he was an excellent farmer, he would not have mentioned the practice unless he considered the advice sound. It is quite possible that the vertical cracking of the bark on one side of a young transplanted tree may be due to a change from the cool north aspect to the heat of the south. At any rate the experiment is well worth trying, and nurserymen would not find it much trouble to run a chalk line down the south side of each tree, when lifting them, as a guide for the purchaser.

As showing how conservative is the popular demand for apples, Cox's Orange Pippin, which is absolutely unapproached for flavour, and is perfectly sound and eatable from early in November till Easter if carefully picked at the right moment and properly stored, was cultivated thirty or forty years before the British public discovered its extraordinary qualities! I find it described as one of the best dessert apples in Dr. Hogg's *Fruit Manual*, and my copy is the third edition published in 1866, so it must have been well known to him some years previously, though we never heard much about it until after the twentieth century came in. Though the colour, when well grown, is highly attractive to the connoisseur, the ordinary buyer did not readily take to it as it is rather small. In 1917 Cox's Orange Pippin, however, really came into its own; I myself, here in the New Forest, grew over 3,000 pounds on about 120 trees planted in 1906, each branch pruned as a *cordon*, and very thinly dispersed, and the trees restricted to a height of about 14 feet. The apples were mostly sold in Covent Garden at 6d. a pound, clear of railway carriage and salesmen's commission. In 1918, a year of great scarcity, these apples were selling in the London shops up to 3s. 6d. apiece! Now that its reputation is fully established, it is likely to be many years before it becomes relatively low in price, as the foreign apples of this kind cannot compare in flavour with those grown in our own orchards. I appreciate the man whose attention was wholly given to some particularly dainty dish, and, being bored at the table by a persistent talker, gently said, "Hush! and let me *listen* to the flavour."

As an early market apple there is none more popular than the Worcester Pearmain, first grown in the early eighties by Messrs. R. Smith and Co., of Worcester, and said to be a cross between King of the Pippins and the old Quarrenden (nearly always called Quarantine). It is a most attractive fruit—brilliant in colour, medium size, with pleasant brisk flavour—and is an early and regular bearer. I recognized its possibilities as soon as I saw it, and getting all the grafts I could collect, and they were very scarce at the time, I had the branches of some of my old worthless trees cut off, and set my old grafter to convert them into Worcester Pearmains; they soon came into bearing and produced abundant and profitable crops.

This apple is not much use for keeping beyond a month or so, as it soon loses its crisp texture and distinctive flavour, and it is its earliness and colour that makes it so popular in its season. Its regularity as a bearer is due to its early maturity; it can be picked in August, which allows plenty of time, in favourable weather, for next year's fruit buds to develop before winter; whereas with the late sorts these buds have very little chance to mature while the current year's fruit is ripening, with the result that a blank season nearly always follows an abundant yield. The Worcester Pearmain is so highly decorative, with its large pale pink and white blossoms in spring and its glowing red fruit in autumn, that it would be worth growing for these qualities alone in the amateur's garden, and in any case it is an apple that nobody should be without.

An old apple, not sufficiently known, is the Rosemary Russet; it has the distinctive russet-bronze colouring, always indicative of flavour, with a rosy flush on the sunny side, and Dr. Hogg describes it further as, "flesh yellow, crisp, tender, very juicy, sugary and highly aromatic—a first-rate dessert apple, in use from December to February." In my opinion it comes next, though *longo intervallo*, to Cox's Orange Pippin, but it wants good land to make the best of it. It may with confidence be produced as a rarity across the walnuts and the wine to the connossieur in apples.

In Covent Garden Market King Pippins are known as "Kings"; Cox's Orange Pippins as "C.O.P.'s"; Cellinis as "Selinas"; Kerry pippins as "Careys"; *Court pendu plat* as "Corpendus"; and the pear, *Joséphine de Malines* as "Joseph on the palings"! The Wellington is sold as "Wellington," but in the markets of the large northern towns it is known as "Normanton Wonder."

In Worcestershire St. Swithin's Day, July 15, is called "apple-christening day," when a good rain often gives a great impetus to their growth, and a little later great quantities of small apples may be seen under the trees; this is Nature's method of limiting the crop to reasonable proportions, the weak ones falling off and the fittest surviving. The inexperienced grower may be somewhat alarmed by this apparent destruction of his prospects, but the older hand knows better, and my bailiff always said: "When I sees plenty of apples under the trees about midsummer, I knows there'll be plenty to pick towards Michaelmas."

The Blenheim Orange was the leading apple at Aldington; some kind person had, sixty or seventy years before my time, planted a number of trees which had thriven wonderfully on that rich land. The Blenheim is a nice dessert apple and a splendid "cooker"; the trees take many years to come into bearing, and then they make up for lost time. Nature is never in a hurry to produce her best results. As a market apple the Blenheim has a great reputation; if an Evesham fruit dealer was asked if he could do with any apples, his first question was always: "Be 'em Blemmins?"

"September blow soft till the fruit's in the loft," is the prayer of all apple growers; it is pitiful to see, after a roaring gale, the ground strewn with beautiful fruit, bruised and broken, useless to keep, and only suitable for carting away to the all-devouring cider-mill, though, even for that purpose, the sweet Blenheim does not produce nearly so good a drink as sourer accredited cider varieties.

Many of the gardening papers will name apples if sent by readers for identification; I was told of an enquirer who sent twelve apples from the same tree, and received eleven different names and one "unknown"! Apples off the same tree do differ wonderfully, but I can scarcely credit this story.

It was the custom formerly at Aldington to sell the fruit on the trees by auction for the buyer to pick and market, growers as a rule being too busy with corn-harvest to attend to the gathering. A considerable sum was thereby often sacrificed, as the buyer allows an ample margin for risks, and is not willing to give more than about half of what he expects to receive ultimately. I discontinued the auction sales early in my farming, preferring to take the risks myself, and having plenty of labour available. It is instructive too to know how individual trees are bearing, and the sorts which produce the best returns.

Except for the choicest fruit, I consider London the worst market, and I could do better, as a rule, by sending my consignments to Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, and Glasgow; the latter especially for large coarse stuff. London is more critical, pays well for the very best, but requires apples to be carefully graded, and the grades separately packed; London is, moreover, naturally well supplied by the southern counties.

At the auctions the competition was generally keen, there being much rivalry between the buyers; and it was good for the sellers when political parties were opposed to each other, for in those days Evesham was inclined to be rather violent in such matters. I remember a lively contest between Conservatives and Radicals, when my largest orchard — about six acres — was sold to the champion of the former for £210, and the Radical exclaimed, as the lot was knocked down, for everybody to hear: "He offered me £10 before the sale to stand out, now that £10 is in Mr. S.'s pocket!"

A few strong gales in the winter are supposed to benefit apple-trees, acting as a kind of root pruning; but sometimes, when they are getting old, they come down bodily with a crash, partly uprooted, though even then they may be resuscitated for a time. We had a powerful set of pulley tackle by which, when made fast to a neighbouring tree, they could be restored to the perpendicular, after enlarging the hole left by the roots, making the ground firm again round the tree, and placing a strong sloping prop to take the weight on the weak side; good yields would then often continue for some years.

When the pickers had gathered the crop, by an ancient custom all the village children were allowed to invade the orchards for the purpose of getting for themselves any apples overlooked. This practice is called "scragging," but it is a custom that would perhaps be better honoured in the breach than in the observance, for hob nails do not agree with the tender bark of young trees. Like gleaning, or "leasing," as it is called, it is nevertheless a pleasant old custom, and seems to give the children huge delight.

Mistletoe did not find my apple-trees congenial, there was only one piece on all my fruit land, and it was regarded as something of a curiosity. But in other parts of the neighbourhood it flourished abundantly, though I noticed that it was most frequent where the land was poorer and the trees not so luxuriant. It was also to be seen on tall black poplars, and I have a piece—planted purposely—on a hawthorn in my garden here. It grows in parts of the Forest, especially on the white-beams in Sloden, in curiously small detached pieces like lichen. The white-beam was a favourite tree of the Romans for the wood-work of agricultural implements, being tough and strong.

Mistletoe is quite easy to propagate by rubbing the glutinous berries and their seeds on the under side of a small branch at the angle where it joins a limb. There it will often flourish unless snapped up by a wandering missel-thrush. It is very slow in growth, but, when it attains a fair size, is strikingly pretty in winter when the tree is otherwise bare, for its peculiar shade of faded green, with its white and glistening berries, makes an unusual effect—quite different from that of any other green thing. It is rare on the oak, and, possibly for that reason, the Druids regarded the oak upon which it grew as sacred.

The transition from apples to cider is a natural one, and cider is a great institution in Worcestershire. On all the larger farms, and in every village, an ancient cider-mill can be found. It consists of a circular block of masonry, perhaps ten feet in diameter, the outer circumference of which is a continuous stone trough, about 18 inches across, and 15 inches deep, called "the chase," in which a huge grindstone, weighing about 15 cwt., revolves slowly, actuated by a horse walking round the chase in an unending circle. The apples are introduced in small quantities into the chase, and crushed into pulp by the grindstone. The pulp is then removed and placed between hair cloths, piled upon each other, until a stack is erected beneath a powerful press, worked by a lever, on the principle of a capstan. As the pressure increases, the liquor runs into a vessel below, from whence it is carried in buckets, and poured into barrels in the cellar. Fermentation begins almost immediately, by which the sugar is converted in carbonic acid gas and alcohol; the gas escapes and the spirit remains in the liquor.

Such is the simplest method of cider-making, and it produces a drink thoroughly appreciated by the men, for we made annually 1,500 to 2,000 gallons, and there was very little left when next year's cider-making began. Where cider is made for sale, much greater care is necessary; only the soundest fruit is used, and the vinous fermentation is allowed to begin in open vessels before the pulp is pressed. When the extracted liquor is placed in the barrels every effort is made to prevent the acetic fermentation, which produces vinegar, and spoils the cider for discriminating palates. The stone mill has been superseded to some extent by the steam "scratter"; but the cider is not considered so good, as the kernels are left uncrushed, an important omission, as they add largely to the flavour of the finished product. After a hot dry summer, cider is unusually strong, because the sugar in the apples is much more fully developed. It is recognized that these hot summers produce what are known as vintage years for cider, just as, on the Continent, they produce vintage wines.

Jarge, of whom I have written, was the presiding genius in the cider-mill, and his duties began as soon as hop-picking was over. All traces of the downward inclination of the corners of his mouth, caused by the delinquencies of recalcitrant hoppers, quite disappeared as soon as his new duties commenced, and it was a pleasure to see his jovial face beaming over a job which seemed to have no drawbacks. A really Bacchanalian presence is the only one that should be tolerated in a cider-maker; the lean and hungry character is quite out of place amidst the fragrance of the crushed apples, and the generous liquor running from the press.

The cider-maker is always allowed a liberal quantity of last year's produce, on the principle of "thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn"—a principle that should always be recognized in the labourer's hire, and one which is too often forgotten by the public in its estimate of the necessities of the farmer himself. It is usual for the man in possession, so to speak, of the cider-mill, to mix, for his own consumption, some of the new unfermented liquor with the old cider, which, after twelve months, is apt to be excessively sour; but the quantity of the former must not be in too large a proportion, as it has a powerful medicinal effect.

> "Wouldst thou thy vats with generous juice should froth?
> Respect thy orchats: think not that the trees
> Spontaneous will produce a wholesome draught,
> Let art correct thy breed."

So sang Philips in his *Cyder* in the distant days of 1706, but the advice is as sound as ever, for good cider can only be produced from the right kinds of apples. The names of new sorts are legion, but some of the old varieties are still considered to be very valuable. Among these, the Foxwhelp has been a favourite for 200 years, and others in great esteem are Skyrme's Kernal, Forest Styre, Hagloe Crab, Dymock Red, Bromley, Cowarne Red, and Styre Wilding. It requires about twenty "pots" (a local measure each weighing 64 pounds) to make a hogshead of cider; a hogshead is roughly 100 gallons, and in Worcestershire is hardly recognizable under the name of "oxsheard"—I have never seen the word in print, but the local pronunciation is faithfully represented by my spelling. Another local appellation which puzzled me for some years was "crab varges," which I eventually discovered to mean "verjuice," a terribly sour liquid, made in the same way as cider from crab apples. It was considered a wonderfully stimulating specific for sprains and strains, holding the same pre-eminent position as an embrocation, as did "goose-grace" (goose-grease) as an ointment or emollient. This substance is the melted fat of a goose, and was said to be so powerful that, if applied to the back of the hand, it could shortly be recognized on the palm!

The value of alcohol as a food is generally denied in these days by sedentary people, but very few who have seen its judicious use in agricultural work will be inclined to agree; it is possible that though it may be a carbo-hydrate very quickly consumed in the body, it acts as an aid to digestion, and produces more nourishment from a given quantity of food, than would be assimilated in its absence. The giving out of the men's allowances is, however, a troublesome matter and demands a firm and masterful bailiff or foreman, for "much" is inclined to want "more," and the line should, of course, be drawn far short of excess. It was related of an old lady farmer in the neighbourhood, who always distributed her men's cider with her own hands, that in her anxiety to be on the safe side after a season when the cider was unusually strong, she mixed a proportion of water with the beverage, before the arrival of the recipients. One of the men, however, having discovered the dilution, arrived after the first day with two jars. Asked the reason for the second jar, he answered that he should prefer to have his cider and the water *separate.*

My bailiff always said that sixpennyworth of cider would do more work than a shilling in cash. He was undoubtedly correct, and, moreover, the quantity worth sixpence in the farm cider store would cost a shilling or more at the public-house, to supply an equivalent in alcohol, and valuable time would be lost in fetching it. It is the alcohol that commends it to the agricultural labourer more than any consideration of thirst, and no one can see its effect without the conviction that the men find it not only stimulating, but supporting. A friend of mine, however, found so much satisfaction in a deep draught of cider when he felt really "dry," that he said he would give "a crown" any day for a "good thirst!"

Excess in drink was rare at Aldington, and it was very exceptional for a man to be seen in what were called his "crooked stockings." Fortunately, we had no public-house in the village, and if the men had a moderate allowance during a hard day's work, there was not much temptation to tramp a mile and back at night to the nearest licensed premises in order to sit and swill in the tap-room. I had one man who lived near a place of the sort, and he occasionally took what my bailiff called, "Saints' days," and did not appear for work. I notice that this sort of day is now called by the more suitable name of "alcoholiday."

Well-fermented cider contains from 5 to 10 gallons of alcohol, and perry about 7 gallons, to every 100 gallons of the liquor, which compares with claret 13 to 17, sherry 15 to 20, and port 24 to 26 per cent. of alcohol. I found the truth of the proverb *in vino veritas;* after a quite small allowance of cider on the farm the open-hearted man would become lively, the reserved man taciturn, the crabbed man argumentative; but the work went with a will and a spirit that were not so noticeable when no "tots" were going round.

An old gentleman in the neighbourhood used to tell with much enjoyment the following story of his younger days. "I found myself," he said, "gradually increasing my allowance of whisky and water, as I sat alone of an evening, and I said to myself: 'Now look here, H. W., you began with one glass, very soon you got on to two, and now you're taking three. I'll tell you what it is, H. W., you shan't have another drop of whisky for a month';" "and," he added, "H. W. did it, too!"

Shortly before I came to Aldington the men were suddenly seized with what seemed an unaccountable epidemic; their symptoms were all similar, and a doctor soon diagnosed the complaint as lead-poisoning. Nobody could suggest its origin until the cider was suspected, and, on enquiry, it was elicited that the previous year the stones of the cider-mill chase, which had become loosened by long use, were repaired with melted lead poured in between the joints. The malic acid of the apples had dissolved the lead, and it remained in solution in the cider. To the disgust of the men, the doctor advised removing the bungs from the barrels and letting the cider run off into the drains, but nobody had the heart to comply, for there was the whole year's stock, and it meant a wait of twelve months before it could be replaced. After some months the men got impatient, and told the master they were prepared to take the risk. They began with great caution, and finding no bad result, they gradually increased the dose, still without harm, until the normal allowance was safely reached. It is probable that the barrel which caused the symptoms was the first made after the repairs, and contained an extra quantity of the lead, and although the remainder was more or less contaminated, the poison was in such small amount as to be harmless.

There were many old apple-trees about the hedges and in odd corners, which went by the name of "the roundabouts," and the fruit was annually collected and brought to the cider-mill. Some of these were immense trees, and not very desirable round arable land, owing to their shade, but they were lovely when in bloom, for standing separately, they seemed to develop richer colours than when close together in an orchard.

The story of Shakespeare's carouse, and his night passed under a crab-tree near Bidford, about six miles from Aldington, is well known. It is stated, but not without contradiction, that he excused himself by explaining that he had been drinking with:

> Piping Pebworth, dancing Marston,
> Haunted Hillborough, hungry Grafton,
> Dudging Exhall, papist Wixford,
> Beggarly Broom, and drunken Bidford.

A carousal at all these places would have been a heavy day's work, and I have often thought that if the lines can really be attributed to him, he might have meant that he had met people from all the villages at one of the Whitsuntide merry-makings annually held in the neighbourhood, and passed a jovial time in their company.

Perry is made in much the same way as cider, and when due care has been taken in its manufacture, it is a most delicious and wholesome drink. When bottled and kept to mature it pours out with a beautiful creaming head, and is far superior to ordinary champagne. Both cider and perry should be drunk out of a china or earthenware mug, whence they taste much richer than from glass; but my men always used in the field a small horn cup or "tot," holding about quarter of a pint. I have a very interesting old cider cup, of Fulham or Lambeth earthenware I think, holding about a quart, with three handles, each of which is a greyhound with body bent to form the loop for the hand. It was intended for the use of three persons sitting together at a small three-cornered oak table, specimens of which are still, though rarely, met with at furniture sales in farm-houses or cottages; the cup was placed in the middle, and each person could take a pull by using his particular handle with the adjacent place for his lips, without passing the cup round or using the same drinking space as another.

There are numerous kinds of perry pears, but certain sorts have a great reputation, such as Moorcroft, Barland, Malvern Hills, Longdon, Red Horse, Mother Huff Cap, and Chate Boy (cheat boy), a particularly astringent pear; these are all small, and require quickly grinding when gathered. In the New Forest there is a perry pear similar to the Chate Boy, called Choke Dog, which in its natural state, is quite as rough on the palate as the former, but it differs in colour and is not the same sort. I had a splendid specimen of the Chate Boy pear-tree at an outlying set of buildings, said to be the father of all the trees of that kind in the neighbourhood, and it was a landmark for miles, as it stood on high ground. It was fitted with a ladder reaching to the middle of the tree, where seats were arranged on a platform for eight or nine people; but it was unfortunately blown down on the night of the great gale of October 14, 1877, when twelve other trees on the farm were likewise overthrown.

Cider and perry drinkers were said to be more or less immune from many human ailments, including rheumatic affections, though one would expect the acetic acid they contain, unless very carefully made, would have an opposite effect. Certainly my men suffered neither from gout nor rheumatism, and there was a tradition that in 1832, when the cholera was rife in the country, the plague was stayed as soon as the cider districts were approached.

These noble old pear-trees are a great feature of the Vale of Evesham, especially in the more calcareous parts where the lias limestone is not far from the surface; they are exquisite in spring in clouds of pure white blossoms long before the apples are in bloom; in the autumn the foliage presents every tint of crimson, green and gold all softly subdued, and in winter, when the framework of the tree can be seen, it is noticeable how far the massive limbs extend, carrying their girth almost to the summit, in a way that not even the oak can excel. The timber is short in the grain, and wears smooth in the long wood ploughs, and is very suitable for carving quite small and elaborate patterns for such articles as picture frames; but it is somewhat liable to the attack of the woodworm.

CHAPTER XV

PLUMS—CHERRIES

"A right down hearty one he be as'll make some of our maids look alive. And the worst time of year for such work too, when the May-Dukes is in, and the Hearts a-colouring!"—Crusty John in *Alice Lorraine.*

THE Vale of Evesham has the credit of being the birthplace of two most valuable plums—the Damascene, and the Pershore, or Egg plum. These both grow on their own stocks, so require no grafting, and can readily be propagated by severing the suckers which spring up around them from the roots of the tree. The Damascene, as its name implies, is a species of Damson, but coarser than the real Damson or the Prune Damson. They are not so popular on the London market as in the markets of the north, especially in Manchester, where they command prices little inferior to the better sorts, as they yield a brilliant red dye suitable for dying printed cotton goods. When really ripe they are excellent for cooking, and are not to be despised, even raw, on a thirsty autumn day. In years of scarcity these have fetched 30s. and over per "pot" of 72 pounds.

The Pershore is a very different plum, green when unripe, and attaining a golden colour later; they are immense bearers and very hardy, frequently saving the situation for the plum-growers when all other kinds are destroyed by spring frosts. They are specially valuable for bottling, and it is rumoured that in the hands of skilful manufacturers they become "apricots" under certain conditions. As "cookers," too, they are perhaps the most useful of plums, for they can be used in a very green and hard state. It is a wonderful sight to see them being despatched by train at the Evesham stations, loaded sometimes loose like coals in the trucks for the big preserving firms in the north. The trees grow very irregularly and are difficult to keep in shape by pruning, as they send forth suckers from all parts when an attempt is made to keep them symmetrical. The only purpose for which the fruit is of little use is for eating raw, they are not unpleasant when just ripe, but that stage is soon passed and they become woody and unpalatable.

I planted a thousand of these trees in a new orchard, and took great pains with the pruning myself, for it was curious that in that land of fruit at the time no professional pruner could be found. I sought the advice of a market-gardener and plum-grower, who, in the early stage of their growth, gave me an object-lesson, cutting back the young shoots rather hard to induce them to throw out more at the point of incision, so as to produce eventually a fuller head; while he reiterated the instruction, "It is no use being afraid of 'em."

This young orchard adjoined the Great Western Railway, and one day when pruning there I saw a remarkable sight, and I have never found any one with a similar experience. The telegraph wires were magnified into stout ropes by a coating of white rime, and I could see a distinct series of waves approximating to the dots and dashes of the Morse code running along them. The movement would run for a time up towards London, cease for a moment, and then run downwards towards Evesham, and so on almost continuously. I thought it might be caused by the passage of electricity, but I cannot get a satisfactory explanation. No trains were passing, there was no wind, the rime was not thawing or falling off, and apparently there was nothing to agitate either poles or wires.

This orchard was not a lucky one; it was too low, having only one flat meadow between it and the brook, and therefore very liable to spring frosts. I have seen the trees well past the blossoming stage, with young plums as large as peas, which after two nights' sharp frost turned black and fell off to such an extent that there was scarcely a plum left; but I had a few very good crops which gave employment to a number of additional hands besides my regular people.

A season came when the plum-trees in my new orchard were badly attacked by the caterpillars of the winter-moth, but the cuckoos soon found them out, and I could see half a dozen at once enjoying a bountiful feast. When better plums are abundant the Pershore falls to very low prices; I have sold quantities at 1s. or 1s. 3d. per pot of 72 pounds, at which of course there was a loss; but it is needless to say that at such times the consumer never gets the benefit, 2d. a pound being about the lowest figure at which they are ever seen on offer in the shops.

The Victoria is a very superior plum to the Pershore, and a local plum called Jimmy Moore is also a favourite. I believe this plum is very similar to, if not identical with, one sold as Emperor; both it and the Victoria nearly always made good prices and bore well. The Victoria, especially, was so prolific that in some seasons, if not carefully propped, every branch would be broken off by the weight of fruit, and the tree left a wreck. Not discouraged, however, it would shoot out again and in a few years bear as well as ever.

My best plum was the greengage, rather a shy bearer but always in demand. Living in a land of Goshen, like the Vale of Evesham, one gets quite hypercritical (or "picksome," as the local expression is), and scarcely cares to taste a fruit from a tree in passing; but I used to visit my greengages at times when the pickers had done with them, for they have to be gathered somewhat unripe to ensure travelling undamaged. I often found, on the south side of the tree, a few that had been overlooked which were fully ripe, beautifully mottled, full of sunshine, and perfect in melting texture and ambrosial flavour.

For restocking old worn-out apple orchards, in Worcestershire at any rate, there is nothing to equal plum-trees; they flourished amazingly at Aldington, and soon made up for the lost apples; they appeared to follow the principle that dictates the rotation of ordinary crops, just as the leguminous plants alternate satisfactorily with the graminaceous, or, as I have read that in Norway, where a fir forest has been cut, birch will spring up automatically and take its place.

My predecessor always sold his plums on the trees for the buyer to harvest, and I heard that when the former turned a flock of Dorset ewes into one of these orchards, the buyer complained—the lower branches being heavily laden, and within a few feet of the ground—that he had watched, "Them old yows holding down bunches of plums with their harns for t'others to eat." This I imagine was in the nature of hyperbole, and not intended to be taken literally.

I had about forty cherry trees in one of my orchards, and among them a very early kind of black cherry, as well as Black Bigarreaus, White Heart and Elton Heart. The early ones made particularly good prices, but when the French cherries began to be imported, being on the market a week or two before ours they "took the keen edge off the demand," though wretched-looking things in comparison. The cherries from my forty trees made £80 one year when the crop was good, but they are expensive to pick as there is much shifting of heavy ladders, and the work was done by men. In Kent, I believe, women are employed at cherry-picking, ascending forty-round ladders in a gale of wind without a sign of nervousness, but with a man in attendance to pack the fruit and shift the ladders when required. I found Liverpool the best market for cherries, where they were bought by the large steamship companies for the Transatlantic liners, and where they were in demand for the seaside and holiday places in North Wales and Lancashire. Like the pear-trees, the cherry-trees are very beautiful in spring, and again in autumn, and as mine could be seen from the house and garden, they added a great charm to the place.

I must put in a word here for the bullfinch, which is unreasonably persecuted for its supposed destruction of the cherry crop when in bloom; it undoubtedly picks many blossoms to pieces, but probably no ultimate loss of weight follows; very few comparatively of the blooms ever become fruits in any case, and even if some are thus nipped in the bud, it is probable that the remainder mature into larger and finer cherries in consequence. The advantage of thinning is recognized in the case of all our fruits, and is indeed, the reason for pruning. The vine-grower knows well the truth of the saying that, "You should get your enemy to thin your grapes," and I would sacrifice many cherries for a few of these beautiful birds in my garden, for man does not live by bread alone.

One of the old couplets, of which our forefathers were so fond, runs:

"A cherry year is a merry year,
And a plum year is a dumb year."

I have seen the explanation suggested that cherries being particularly wholesome contributed to the happiness of mankind, but that the less salubrious plum tended to depression of health and spirits. There is, however, a small black cherry still grown in this and other parts of Hampshire and Surrey called the "Merry," from the French *merise*, and it was natural that when cherries were abundant the merry would also be plentiful. The word "dumb" is an archaic synonym for "damson," and the same rule would apply between it and the plum, as with the cherry and the merry. My own small place here, in the New Forest, has been known for centuries as "the Merry Gardens," and no doubt they were once grown here, as at other places in the south of England, called Merry Hills, Merry Fields, and Merry Orchards. Even now as I write, on May Day, the buds on the wild cherries in my hedges are showing the white bloom just ready to appear, and in a few days, these trees will be spangled with their little bright stars. I imagine that they are no very distant relation of the old merry-trees that once flourished here.

CHAPTER XVI

TREES: ELM—OAK—BEECH—WILLOW—SCOTS-FIR

> "O flourish, hidden deep in fern,
> Old oak, I love thee well;
> A thousand thanks for what I learn
> And what remains to tell."
> *The Talking Oak.*

KEATS tells us that

> "The trees
> That whisper round a temple become soon
> Dear as the temple's self,"

and had he included the trees around a dwelling-house, the epigram would have been equally applicable. Sometimes, of course, it becomes absolutely necessary to cut down an ancient tree that from its proximity to one's home has become a part of the home itself, but it is a matter for the gravest consideration, for one cannot foresee the result, and to a person who has lived long with a noble tree as a near neighbour, the place never again seems the same.

The Elm is said to be the Worcestershire weed, as the oak is in Herefordshire; the former attains a great size, but it is not very deeply rooted, and a heavy gale will sometimes cause many unwelcome gaps in a stately avenue. Big branches, too, have a way of falling without the least notice, and on the whole it is safer not to have elms near houses or cottages. One of the finest avenues of elms I know, is to be seen at the Palace of the Bishop of Winchester at Farnham in Surrey, but the land is quite exceptionally good, and in the palmy days of hop-growing, the adjoining fields commanded a rent of £20 an acre for what is known as the "Heart land of Farnham," where hops of the most superlative quality were grown. When the dappled deer are grouped under this noble avenue, in the light and shade beneath the elms, they form an old English picture of country life not to be surpassed.

The elm is a sure sign of rich land, it is never seen on thin poor soils. An intending purchaser, or tenant, of a farm should always regard its presence as a certain indication of a likely venture. It is a terrible robber, and therefore a nuisance round arable land, causing a spreading shade, under which the corn will be found thin, "scrawley," and "broken-kneed," with poor, shrivelled ears; and the alternating green crops will also suffer in their way. In an orchard it is still worse; I had several at one time surrounded by Blenheim apples, which were always small, scanty, and colourless. Eventually, I cut the elms down, the biggest, carrying perhaps 100 cubic feet of timber at 9d. a foot at the time, was only worth 75s., though it must have destroyed scores of pounds worth of fruit during its many years of growth. The elm seems particularly liable to be struck by lightning, possibly owing to its height, and several suffered in this way during my time at Aldington.

From the scarcity of oak in the Vale of Evesham elm was often used for making the coffers or chests we generally see made from the former wood. I have one of these, nicely carved with the scrolls and bold devices of the Jacobean period, and it is so dark in colour as to pass at first sight for old oak. The timber is not much used in building, except for rough farm sheds; as boards it is liable to twist and become what is called "cross-winding." The land in the New Forest is mostly too poor for the elm, and this should warn the theorists, who during the war have advocated reclaiming the open heaths and moors for agricultural purposes, against such an ignorant proposition. I suppose it would cost at least £100 an acre to clear, drain, fence, level, make roads, and erect the necessary farm buildings, houses and cottages, with the result that it would command less than £1 per acre as annual rent; and I should be sorry to be compelled to farm it at that.

Oaks are somewhat scarce in Worcestershire, and are rarely found in the Vale of Evesham. I had one remarkably fine specimen in a meadow on Claybrook, the farm I owned, adjoining the Aldington land. It covered an area measuring 22 yards by 22 yards=484 square yards, the tenth part of an acre. The trunk measured 12 feet in circumference, about 7 feet from the ground. The rule for estimating the age of growing oak-trees is to calculate 15 years to each inch of radius=540 years to a yard, therefore a tree 6 feet in diameter, and about 20 feet round, including bark and knots, would be just that age. According to this rule my tree would be not less than 330 years old, which of course is young for an oak.

The life of this oak was saved in a peculiar way by "a pint of drink," and the story was told me by the agent of an old lady, the previous owner. It had been decided to fell the tree, and two professional sawyers, who were also "tree-fallers" (fellers), arrived one morning for the purpose with their axes and cross-cut saw. They surveyed the prospect and agreeing that it presented a tough job, an adjournment was arranged to the neighbouring "Royal Oak" for a pint of drink before commencing operations. Coming back, half an hour later, they had just stripped and rolled up their shirt sleeves, when the agent appeared on the road not far off. "Hullo," he shouted, "have you made a start?" "Just about to begin," replied the head man. "Well then, don't," said the agent, "the old lady died last night, and I must wait till the new owners have considered the matter." So the tree was saved, and curiously enough by its namesake the "Royal Oak." The new owner spared it, and later when it became my property I did likewise, for I should have considered it sacrilege to destroy the finest oak in the neighbourhood. Some years after I had sold the farm I heard that the tree was blown down in a gale, its enormous head and widespread branches must have offered immense resistance to the wind, and the fall of it must have been great.

The most celebrated, if not the biggest oak in the New Forest is the Knightwood oak, not far from Lyndhurst; it is 17 feet in circumference, which would make it not less than 450 years old by the above rule. It is strange to think that it may have been an acorn in the year 1469, in the reign of Henry VI., and that 200 years later it could easily have peeped over the heads of its neighbours in 1669, to see Charles II., who probably went riding along the main Christchurch road from Lyndhurst with a team of courtiers and court beauties, in all the pomp of royalty. We know that in that year with reference to the waste of timber in the Forest during his father's reign he was especially interested in the planting of young oaks, and enclosed a nursery of 300 acres for their growth. It is also recorded that he did not forget the maids of honour of his court, upon whom he bestowed the young woods of Brockenhurst.

"Oak before ash—only a splash,
Ash before oak—a regular soak,"

is a very ancient proverb referring to the relative times of the leaves of these trees appearing in the spring, and is supposed to be prophetic of the weather during the ensuing summer. I have, however, noticed for many years that the oak is invariably first, so that like some other prognostications, it seems to be unreliable.

The attitudes of oak trees are a very interesting study. There is the oak which, bending forwards and stretching out a kindly hand, appears to offer a hearty welcome; the oak that starts backward in astonishment at any familiarity advanced by a passing stranger. The oak that assumes an attitude of pride and self-importance; the oak that approaches a superior neighbour with an air of humility and abasement, listening subserviently to his commands. The shrinking oak in dread of an enemy, and the oak prepared to offer a stout resistance. The hopeful oak in the prime of life, and the oak that totters in desolate and crabbed old age. The oak that enjoys in middle age the good things of life, with well-fed and rounded symmetry; and the oak that suggests decrepitude, with rough exterior, and a life-experience of hardship; the sturdy oak, the ambitious oak, the self-contained oak, and so on, through every phase of character. No other tree is so human or so expressive, and no other tree bespeaks such fortitude and endurance. To say that a well-grown oak typifies the reserve and strength of the true-born Briton, is perhaps to sum up its individuality in a word.

There is one old fellow who throws back his head and roars with laughter when I go by; what can be the joke? I must stop some day and look to see if the sides of his rather tight jacket of Lincoln green moss are really splitting, and perhaps, if I can catch the pitch of his voice, I shall hear him whisper:

> "A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest."

I like to think that these old personalities are transmigrations, and that each is now at leisure to correct some special mistake in a previous existence. Perhaps, out there in the moonlight, they tell their stories to each other, and to the owls I hear at midnight performing an appropriately weird overture.

These talking oaks can only be found where they have grown from acorns naturally, and where they have survived the struggle of life against their enemies, including the interference of man, the attacks of grazing animals, the blasts of winter and the heavy burden of its snows. The natural woods, as distinct from the plantations of the New Forest, offer many examples of these varying trees and the lessons they convey. Such a piece of old natural forest almost surrounds my present home, and every time I pass through it I bless the memory of William the Conqueror. Randolph Caldecott, that prince of illustrators of rural life, evidently noticed the characteristic attitudes of trees; look at the sympathetic dejection displayed by the two old pollard willows in his sketch of the maiden all forlorn, in *The House that Jack Built.* The maiden has her handkerchief to her eyes, and in a few masterly strokes one of the trees is depicted with a falling tear, and the other bent double is hobbling along with a crutch supporting its withered and tottering frame.

Far otherwise is it with the plantations where the oaks are artificially cultivated for timber. These are planted close together on purpose to draw each other upwards in the struggle for air and sunlight, which prevents their branching so near the ground as the natural trees, the object being to produce an extended length of straight trunk that will eventually afford a long and regular cut of timber, free from the knots caused by the branches. All round the plantations Scots-firs are planted as "nurses," to keep off the rough winds and prevent breakage; these also help to lengthen the trunks by inducing upward development. As the trees get nearer together they are repeatedly thinned out, and, eventually, only those left which are intended to come to maturity. Under this artificial, though necessary system, the trees lose all individuality, and they never regain it because they are all more or less controlled when growing, and so become uninteresting copies of each other.

The motto of the natural oak is *festina lente*, mindful of the proverb, "early maturity means early decay." It is well known that oak, slowly and naturally grown on poor soil, is far more durable than that which is run up artificially or produced on rich land. The branches of oaks rarely cross or damage each other by friction, like those of the beech, they are obstinate and will sooner break in a gale, than give way. Where an oak and a beech grow side by side, close together, the oak suffers more than the beech, from the dense shade of the latter; and if they are so near as to touch and rub together in the wind, the oak will throw out a plaster or protection of bark, to act as a styptic to the wound in the first place, and eventually as a solid barrier against further aggression.

Paintings of landscape in which trees occur are rarely satisfactory; if you look at children playing beneath timber trees, or passers-by, the first thing that strikes you is the majesty and the height of the tree, as compared with the human figure. In paintings this is not as a rule expressed; the trees are too insignificant, and the figures too important, so that the range and wealth of tree-life is lost. Gainsborough's *Market Cart* is a notable exception, but the cart is a clumsy affair, and the shafts are much too low both on it and the horse. Constable's *Valley Farm*, *The Haywain*, *The Cornfield*, and *Dedham Mill* are all striking examples of his sense of tree proportion, lending no little to the nobility of his pictures, and speaking eloquently of the reverence man should feel in the presence of Nature, untainted by his own fancied importance.

What is known as "heart of oak" in Worcestershire is called "spine-oak" in the New Forest, and the latter is perhaps the better name of the two as expressive of greater durability. The outer part of the trunk is called "the sap," and whilst the heart or spine is almost indestructible, the sap-wood quickly decays, and is rejected in using the timber for any important purpose. Pieces of the sap adhering to the heart-wood of which the old oak coffers were made, may often be found riddled with worm holes and almost gone to dust, while the remainder of the chest is as sound as the day it was made two or three hundred years ago.

It is interesting, too, to notice marks of charring on the edge of the lids of these coffers; it is said that they were caused by placing the rushlight in that position, the flame just overhanging the edge, to give time to jump into bed by its light, leaving it to be automatically extinguished on reaching the wood; and that the charring occurred when sometimes the flame continued to burn a little longer than expected.

Oak is usually felled in the spring when the sap is rising, to allow of the easier removal of the bark for tanning. It is a pretty sight to see, amidst the greenery of the standing trees, the stripped and gleaming trunks and larger limbs stretched upon the ground, with the neatly piled stacks of bark arranged for the air to draw through and dry them before removal. This is called "rining" in the New Forest, and good wages are earned at it by the men employed.

It is perhaps the only timber, with the exception of sweet chestnut, that is worthy to be used for the roofs of ecclesiastical buildings. At Badsey, when we removed the roof of the church prior to restoration, we found the oak timbers on the north side as sound as when placed there many years further back than living memory could recall, and of which no record or tradition existed. These timbers were all used again in the new roof, but those from the south side had to be discarded, having been much more exposed to driving rain and daily changes of temperature.

I had a number of oak field-gates made, but as the timber was barely seasoned, we were afraid shrinkage might take place in the mortises and tenons, and it was an agreeable surprise to find in a year or two that nothing of the kind had happened. The mortise hole had apparently got smaller, and still fitted the shrunken tenon to perfection. Oak gates will last, if kept occasionally painted, sixty or seventy years in farm use, and there were gates on my land fully that age and still quite serviceable.

The acorns from oaks in pastures are a trouble, as cattle are very fond of them and sometimes gorge themselves to such an extent as to prove fatal, if allowed unrestricted access to them when really hungry; but in the New Forest they are welcomed by the commoners (occupiers of private lands), some of whom possess the right of "pannage" (turning out pigs on the Crown property).

In old days the oak timbers of which our battleships were constructed were supplied from the New Forest; and the saw-pit in which the timbers of the *Victory* were sawn by hand is still to be seen in Burley New Plantation. But Government methods appear to have been generally conducted in later times somewhat on the independent lines which distinguished them in the Great War. Some years ago it was said that a department requiring oak timber advertised for tenders in a newspaper, in which also appeared an advertisement of another department offering oak for sale. A dealer who obtained an option to purchase from the latter, submitted a tender to the former, succeeded in obtaining the business, and cleared a large profit.

The oak has figured repeatedly in English history and occupies a unique place in our national tradition, commencing with its Druidical worship as a sacred tree. It was from an oak that the arrow of Walter Tyrrel which struck down William Rufus is said to have glanced, and Magna Charta was signed beneath an oak by the unwilling hand of King John. It is associated in all ages with preachings, political meetings, and with parish and county boundaries. These boundary oaks were called Gospel-trees, it is said, because the gospel for the day was read beneath them by the parochial priest during the annual perambulation of the parish boundaries by the leading inhabitants in Rogation week. Herrick alludes to the practice in the lines addressed to Anthea in *Hesperides*:

> "Dearest, bury me
> Under that Holy-oke or Gospel-tree,
> Where (though thou see'st not) thou may'st think upon
> Me, when thou yeerly go'st Procession."

But perhaps the oak that appeals most to the lively imagination venerating old tales of merry England, and with whose story generous hearts are most in sympathy, is that

> "Wherein the younger Charles abode
> Till all the paths were dim,
> And far below the Roundhead rode,
> And hummed a surly hymn."

The beech is not a common tree in the Vale of Evesham, preferring the dryer soils of the Cotswold Hills. It is said to have been introduced by the Romans, and is familiar as the tree mentioned by Virgil in the opening line of his first Pastoral:

> "*Tityre tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi;*"

the metre, and the words of which, apart from their signification, suggest so accurately the pattering of the leaves of the tree in a gentle breeze. This device like alliteration is a method of intensifying the expression of a passage, and is frequently adopted by the poets.

In another famous onomatopœic line—

"*Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum*"

—Virgil imitates the sound of a galloping horse, and the shaking of the ground beneath its hoofs.

Tennyson renders very naturally the action of the northern farmer's nag and the sound of its movement, by—

"Proputty, proputty sticks an' proputty, proputty graws."

And an excellent example of the effect of well-chosen words, to express the sound produced by the subject referred to, occurs in the *Morte d'Arthur:*

"The many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge."

Blackmore's passage in *Lorna Doone,* describing the superlative ease and speed of Tom Faggus's mare, when John Ridd as a boy was allowed to ride her—after a rough experience at the beginning of the venture—is, though printed as prose, perhaps better poetry than most similar efforts. To emphasize its full force it may be allowable to divide the phrases as follows:

"I never had dreamed of such delicate motion,
Fluent, and graceful, and ambient,
Soft as the breeze flitting over the flowers,
But swift as the summer lightning.
I sat up again, but my strength was all spent,
And no time left to recover it,
And though she rose at our gate like a bird,
I tumbled off into the mixen."

The last line is a delightful bathos, adding immensely to the completeness of the catastrophe.

In spring the beech is the most beautiful of forest trees, putting forth individual horizontal sprays of tender green from the lower branches about the end of April as heralds of the later full glory of the tree. These increase day by day upwards in verdant clouds, until the whole unites into a complete bower of dense greenery. The beech is known as the "groaning tree," because the branches often cross each other, and where the tree is exposed to the wind sometimes groan as they rub together. The rubbing often causes a wound where one of the branches will eventually break off, or occasionally automatic grafting takes place, and they unite. In the Verderer's Hall at Lyndhurst specimens are to be seen which have crossed and joined a second time, so that a complete hollow oval, or irregular circle of the wood could be cut out of the branch.

Estates where extensive beech woods existed have been bought by speculative timber dealers, who shortly installed a gang of wood cutters and a steam saw, on which the timber was sawn into suitable pieces, to be afterwards turned on a lathe into chair legs and other domestic furniture, and very often finally dyed to represent mahogany. There are beeches in the New Forest which vie with the oak for premier place, measuring over 20 feet in circumference, and the mast together with the acorns affords abundant harvest, or "ovest," as it is called, for the commoners' pigs.

There was a curious saying in use by persons on the road to Pershore, when asked their destination. In a good plum year the reply was, "Pershore, where d'ye think ?" And in a year of scarcity, "Pershore, God help us !" The same expressions were formerly current regarding Burley in the New Forest referring to the abundance or scarcity of beech-mast and acorns, called collectively "akermast."

When the nation had presented the Duke of Wellington, after the Battle of Waterloo, with Strathfieldsaye, an estate between Basingstoke and Reading, the Duke wishing to commemorate the event planted a number of beech trees as a lasting memorial, which were known as "the Waterloo beeches." Some years later, the eminent arboricultural author, John Loudon, writing on the subject of the relative ages and sizes of trees, wrote to the Duke for permission to view his Waterloo beeches. The Duke had never heard of Loudon, and his writing being somewhat illegible he deciphered the signature "J. Loudon" as "J. London" (the Bishop of London), and the word "beeches" as "breeches." "For what on earth can the Bishop want to see the breeches I wore at Waterloo?" said the Duke; but taking a charitable view of the matter he decided that the poor old Bishop must be getting irresponsible and replied that he was giving his valet instructions to show the Bishop the garments in question, whenever it suited him to inspect them. The Bishop was equally amazed, but took exactly the same view about the Duke as the latter had decided upon concerning the Bishop. No doubt the mystery was eventually cleared up, and Bishop and Duke must have both enjoyed the joke.

The shade of the beech is so dense that grass will not grow beneath it; it gradually kills even holly, which is comparatively flourishing under the oak. The beech woods in the Forest are thus quite free from undergrowth, and the noble trees with their smooth ash-coloured stems can be seen in perfection, giving a cathedral aisle effect, which is erroneously said to have suggested the massive columns and groined roofs of Gothic architecture.

> "Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault,
> The pealing anthem swells the note of praise."

There is, too, an unearthly effect at times to be seen beneath them, so exaggerated as to remind one of the stage setting of a pastoral play, with all the enhancing artificial contrivance of light and shade. It is to be seen only on a brilliantly sunny day, where the contour of the space around the stem and below the branches takes the form of an arched cavern, flooded by a single shaft of sunlight, piercing the foliage at one particular spot, lighting up the floor carpeted with last year's red-brown leaves, and emphasizing the gloom of the walls and roof. Imagination instantly supplies the players, for a more perfect setting for Rosalind and Celia, Orlando and the melancholy Jaques, it would be impossible to conceive. It is said that the ancient Greeks could see with their ears and hear with their eyes, a privilege doubtless granted to the nature lover in all ages. In the Forest some of the most ancient and remarkable trees have borne for generations descriptive names such as the King and Queen oaks at Boldrewood, and the Eagle oak in Knightwood. The communion between human and tree life is well illustrated by a passage from Thoreau's *Walden:* "I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech tree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines."

At Aldington a most valuable tree was the willow, or "withy," as it is called in Worcestershire, though in Hampshire the latter name is given to the Goat willow, or sallow ("sally," in Worcestershire), bearing the pretty blossoms known as palms, which in former times were worn by men and boys in country places on Palm Sunday. My brooks were bordered on both sides by pollard withies, the whole being divided into seven parts or annual cuts, so that, as they are lopped every seven years a cut came in for lopping each year. They were then well furnished with long and heavy poles, which were severed close to the head of the pollard with a sharp axe. When on the ground, the brushwood was cut off and tied into "kids" (faggots) for fire-lighting, the poles being made into hurdles or sold to the crate-makers in the potteries for crates in which to pack earthenware goods of all descriptions. The men employed at the lopping had to stand on the heads of the pollards, and it was sometimes quite an acrobatic feat to maintain their balance on a small swaying tree, or on one which overhung the water.

There was a local saying that "the withy tree would buy the horse, while the oak would only buy the halter," and I believe it to be perfectly true; for the uses of the withy are innumerable, and throughout its seven years' growth from one lopping to another there is always something useful to be had from it, with its final harvest of full-grown poles. One year after lopping the superfluous shoots are cut out and used or sold for "bonds" for tying up "kids" or the mouths of corn sacks. As the shoots grow stronger more can be taken—with ultimate benefit to the development of the full-grown poles—for use as rick pegs and "buckles" in thatching. The buckles are the wooden pins made of a small strip of withy, twisted at the centre so that it can be doubled in half like a hairpin, and used to fix the rods which secure the thatch by pressing the buckles firmly into it. In Hampshire these are called "spars," and they are sold in bundles containing a fixed number.

I heard an amusing story about these spars. A certain thatcher, we may call him Joe, was engaged upon the roof of a cottage, when the parson of the parish chanced to pass that way. Joe had of late neglected his attendance at church, and the vicar saw his way to a word of advice. After "passing the time of day" he took Joe to task for his neglected attendance and waxing warm expressed his fears that Joe had forgotten all his Sunday-school lessons; he was doubtful even, he said, if Joe could tell him the number of the Commandments. Joe confessed his ignorance. "Dear me," said the vicar, "to think that in this nineteenth century any man could be found so ignorant as not to know the number of the Commandments!" Joe bided his time until the vicar's attention had been called to the spars, when Joe asked him how many a bundle contained. It was a problem that the vicar could not solve. "Dear me," said Joe, "to think that in this 'ere nineteenth century any man could be found so ignorant as not to know the number of spars in a bundle!" Joe always added when telling the story, "But there," I says, "every beggar," I says, "to his trade," I says.

Sometimes a picturesque gipsy would come to the Manor House with clothes-pegs for sale, and she generally negotiated a deal, for everybody has a sneaking regard for the gipsies and their romantic life *sub Jove*. Walking round the farm shortly afterwards I would come upon the remains of their fire and deserted camp by the roadside close to the brook, the ground strewn with the peel and refuse from the materials with which they had supplied themselves gratis, and I recognized that we had been buying goods made from my own withies. Even so we did not complain, for no real harm was done to the trees.

The heads of these old pollards are favourite places for birds'-nests, and all kinds of plants and bushes take root in their decaying fibre, the seeds having been carried by the birds; so that ivy, brambles, wild gooseberries, currants, raspberries, nut bushes and elders, can be seen growing there. Whenever the foxhounds ran a fox to Aldington he was always lost near the brookside, and it was said that the cunning beast eluded the hounds by mounting a pollard and jumping from one to another, until the scent was dissipated. It was also a tradition that when hunting began on the Cotswolds the experienced foxes left for the Vale, leaving the less crafty to fight it out with the hounds; for the Evesham district was seldom visited by the hunt, owing to possible damage to the highly cultivated winter crops of the market-gardeners.

Jarge had a very narrow escape when grubbing out an old willow overhanging a pool. He had been at work some hours, and had a deep trench dug out all round the tree, to attack the roots with a stock-axe. He had cut them all through except the tough tap-root, when I reached him, and he was standing in the trench at work upon it. He was certain that it would be some time before the tree fell, the tap-root being very large; but, as I stood watching on the ground above, I thought I saw a suspicious tremor pass over the tree, and an instant later I was certain it was coming down. I shouted to him to get out of the trench. It took a second or two to get clear, as the trench was deep, and he was not a tall man, so he was scarcely out when the tree fell with a crash on the exact spot where he had been at work. Had I not been present it must have fallen upon him, for not expecting the end was so near he had not been watching the signs. Though not a tall tree, it was a very stout and heavy trunk, and the tap-root on inspection proved to be partly rotten.

> "Forth into the fields I went,
> And Nature's living motion lent
> The pulse of hope to discontent.
>
> "I wonder'd at the bounteous hours,
> The slow result of winter showers:
> You scarce could see the grass for flowers.
>
> "I wonder'd, while I paced along:
> The woods were fill'd so full with song,
> There seemed no room for sense of wrong."

Such is Tennyson's description of a spring day in the fields and woods, and nothing more beautiful could be written. And so it was with joy that my men and carter boys with waggons and teams started early on the spring mornings to bring home the newly purchased hop-poles from the distant woods. These poles are sold by auction in stacks where they are cut, and the buyer has to cart them home. Usually, after a successful hop year they were in great demand; prices would rise in proportion, and the early seller did well, but when the later sales came sometimes, the demand being satisfied, there would be a heavy fall in values, and as a cunning buyer expressed it, "The poles lasted longer than the money."

The dainty catkins of the hazel are the first sign of awakening life in the woods; they are well out by the end of January or early in February, and as they ripen, clouds of pollen are disseminated by the wind. Tennyson speaks of "Native hazels tassel-hung." The female bloom, which is the immediate precursor of the nut itself, is a pretty little pink star, which can be found on the same branch as the catkin but is much less conspicuous; and both are a very welcome sight, as almost the earliest hint of spring. The hazel bloom is shortly followed by the green leaves of the woodbine, which climbs so exultingly to the tops of the highest trees and breathes its fragrance on a summer evening. In the New Forest the green hellebore is early and noticeable from its peculiar green blossoms, but I have not seen it in Worcestershire.

My men and teams were generally off to the hills, Blockley, Broadway, Winchcombe, Farmcote, and suchlike out-of-the-way places, when the wet "rides" in the woods were drying up. The boys especially revelled in the flowers—primroses and wild hyacinths—and came home with huge bunches; they enjoyed the novelty of the woods and the wild hill-country, which is such a contrast to the flat and highly cultivated Vale.

When unloaded at home the poles have to be trimmed, cut to the proper length, 12 to 14 feet, "sharped," "shaved" at the butt 2 or 3 feet upwards, and finally boiled so far for twenty-four hours, standing upright in creosote, which doubles the lasting period of their existence. They were chiefly ash, larch, maple, wych elm, and sallow, and the rough butts, when sawn off before the sharping, supplied the firing for the boiling. Green ash is splendid for burning: "The ash when green is fuel for a Queen." Later, when I adopted a Kentish system of hop-growing on coco-nut yarn supported by steel wire on heavy larch poles, our visits to the woods were less frequent, and much wear and tear of horses and waggons was saved. Some of our journeys, in the earlier days, took us to the estate of the Duc d'Aumale, on the Worcester side of Evesham, where some excellent ash poles were grown. In one lot of some thousands I bought, every pole had a crook in it ("like a dog's hind leg," my men said), about 2 or 3 feet from the ground, which was caused by the Duc having given orders some years previously, on the occasion of a visit from the Prince of Wales (the late King Edward), to have a large area of young coppice cut off at that height, to make a specially convenient piece of walking and pheasant shooting for the Prince.

On this occasion many people went to Evesham Station to see the arrival of the Prince and retinue, and their departure for Wood Norton in the Duc's carriages.

Our old vicar was returning full of loyalty, and passing an ancient Badsey radical inquired if he had been to see the Prince. "Noa, sir," was the reply, "I been a-working hard to get some money to keep 'e with." In some of the Wood Norton woods there are large numbers of fir trees, planted, it was said, as roosting places for the pheasants, so that they might not be visible to the night poacher; but it was found that the birds preferred the leafless trees, where they offer an easy pot shot in the moonlight or in the grey of the dawn.

The Scots-fir is an interloper in the New Forest, and always looks out of place; it was introduced as an experiment I believe, less than 150 years ago, and has been found useful as I have explained for sheltering young plantations of oaks. It grows rapidly, and has been planted by itself on land too poor for more valuable timber, chiefly for pit-props. During the war immense numbers of Canadians and Portuguese have been employed in felling these trees and cutting them up into stakes for wire entanglements, trench timbers, and sleepers for light railways. Huge temporary villages have grown up for the accommodation of the men employed, equipped with steam sawing-tackle, canteens, offices and quarters, and with light railways running far away into the plantations where the trees are cut. It was a wonderful sight to see these busy centres alive with men and machinery, in places where before there was nothing but the silence of the woods. And it is curious that, as in the old days the New Forest provided the oak timber for the battleships that fought upon the sea in Nelson's time, so now, in the fighting on land, we have been able to export from the same place hundreds of thousands of tons of fir for the use of our troops in France and Belgium.

Old railway sleepers are exceedingly useful for many purposes on farms, and as they are soaked in creosote, they last many years, for light bridges and rough shelters, after they are worn out for railway purposes. The railway company adjoining my land discarded a quantity of these partly defective sleepers, and left them, for a time, lying beside the hedge which separated the line from my fields. I applied to the Company for some, and suggested that they need only be put over the hedge, and I would cart them away. But that is not the routine of the working of such matters; though it appeals to the simple rustic mind, it would be considered "irregular." They had to be loaded on trucks sent specially on the railway, taken to Worcester sixteen miles by train, unloaded, sorted, loaded again, sent back to my station, unloaded, loaded again on to my waggons, and carted a mile and a half on the waggons which had been sent empty the same distance to the station!

Overgrown old hedges are exceedingly pretty in autumn when hung with clusters of "haws," the brilliant berries of the hawthorn, and the "hips" of the wild rose. There is, too, the peculiar pink-hued berry of the spindle wood, and, in chalky and limestone districts, the "old man's beard" of the wild clematis, bright fresh hazel nuts, and golden wreaths of wild hops. It is said that

> "Hops, reformation, bays and beer
> Came into England all in a year."

But it is certain that the wild hops at any rate must have been indigenous, for one finds them in neighbourhoods far from districts where hops are cultivated, and the couplet probably refers to the Flemish variety, which would be the sort imported in the days of Henry VIII., though at the present time our best varieties are far superior.

The holly is only seen as garden hedges in the more sandy parishes of Worcestershire, but here in the Forest it is a splendid feature, growing to a great size and height. In winter its bright shining leaves reflecting the sunlight enliven the woods, so that we never get the bare and cheerless look of places where the elm and the whitethorn hedge dominate the landscape. In spring its small white blossoms are thickly distributed, and at Christmas its scarlet berries are ever welcome. Its prickles protect it from browsing cattle and Forest ponies, but it is interesting to notice that many of the leaves on the topmost branches being out of reach of the animals are devoid of this protection.

CHAPTER XVII

CORN—WHEAT—RIDGE AND FURROW—BARLEY—FARMERS NEWSTYLE AND OLDSTYLE

> "He led me thro' the short sweet-smelling lanes
> Of his wheat-suburb, babbling as he went."
> *The Brook.*

I do not propose to enter upon the ordinary details of arable farming, as not of very general interest, except for those actually engaged thereon. I am aiming especially at the more unusual crops, and what I may call the curiosities of agriculture. It is most interesting to turn to Virgil's *Georgics* and see how they apply after the lapse of nearly twenty centuries to the farm-work of the present day. Horace, too, was a farmer, though perhaps more of an amateur; he exclaims at the busy scene presented when men and horses are engaged in active field work:

> "*Heu heu ! quantus equis quantus adest viris*
> *Sudor !*"

which, by the way, was rendered with Victorian propriety by a well-known Oxford professor, "What a quantity of perspiration !" etc. Probably Horace had been watching the sowing of barley or oats on a fine March morning, "the peck of March dust," which we know is "worth a King's ransom," flying behind the harrows. George Cruikshank gives a very spirited and comic realization of Horace's lines, in Hoskin's *Talpa*, where ploughing, sowing, harrowing, reaping, harvesting, thrashing, grinding and carting away the finished product, are all actively proceeding in the same field.

The origin of the word "field," still locally pronounced "feld," as in "Badsey Feld," near Evesham, takes us back to primeval times when the country was mostly forest, of which certain parts had been "felled," and were thus distinguished as opposed to the untouched portions. We may be sure that the best pieces of land were the first to be brought under cultivation, and it is thus that the best land in most old parishes, at the present day, is to be found close to the village, and is generally a portion of the manor property. Later, where glebe was allotted for the parson's benefit, the poorer parts were apparently considered good enough for the purpose, so that we generally expect to find the glebe on somewhat inferior land.

Wheat-growing at Aldington and on most heavy soils was practically killed by the vast importations from the United States, rendered possible by the extraction of the natural fertility of her virgin soils, and by the development of steam traction and transport, resulting in the food crisis at home during the war. The loss of arable land converted to inferior grass amounted, in the forty years from 1874 to 1914, to no less than four million acres. I made such changes in my own cropping that, where I formerly grew 100 acres of wheat annually, I reduced the area to ten or twenty acres, mainly for the sake of the straw for litter and thatching purposes.

Wheat can be planted in what would be considered a very unsuitable tilth for barley. We had often to follow the drills—where they had cut into the clayey soil, leaving the seed uncovered, and where the ground was so sticky and "unkind" that harrowing had very little effect—with forks, turning the clods over the exposed seed, and treading them down. Wheat seems to like as firm a seed-bed as possible, for the best crop was always on the headland, where the turning of the horses and implements had reduced the soil to the condition of mortar. The seed would lie in the cold ground for many weeks before the blade made its appearance, but the men always said, "'Twill be heavy in the head when it lies long abed." It is cheering in late autumn and early winter when no other young growth is to be seen on the farm, suddenly to find the field covered with the fresh shoots of the wheat in regular lines, and to notice how, after its first appearance, it makes little further upright growth for a time, but spreads laterally over the ground as the roots extend downwards.

Nothing in the way of weather will kill wheat, except continuous heavy rain in winter, where the land is undrained, and stagnant water collects. I have seen it in May lying flat on the ground after a severe spring frost, but in a day or two it would pick up again as if nothing had happened. And I have seen beans, 2 feet high, cut down and doubled up, revive and rear up their heads quite happily, though at harvest the exact spot in every stalk could be seen where the wound had taken place.

In May, if the weather is cold and ungenial, wheat turns yellow; this is the weaning time of the young plants, which have then exhausted the nourishment contained in the seed, and in the absence of growing weather they do not take kindly to the food in the land, upon which they now become dependent.

> "The farmer came to his wheat in May,
> And right sorrowfully went away,
> The farmer came to his wheat in June,
> And went away whistling a merry tune."

His wheat was what is called "May-sick" the first time, but had recovered on the second visit, for another old saw tells us that, "A dripping June puts all in tune."

May is said "Never to go out without a wheat-ear," but I do not think this is invariably true, though by splitting open a young wheat stem it is easy to find the embryo ear, only about half an inch long. I have heard people exclaiming at the beautiful effect of the breezes passing over a luxuriant field of growing wheat, giving the appearance of waves on a lake; but when the wheat is in bloom, it is doubtful if this is a reason for congratulation, as the blooms are rubbed off in the process, which may be the cause of thin-chested ears at harvest, when, instead of being set in full rows of four or five grains abreast, only two or three can be found, reducing the total number in an ear from a maximum of about seventy to fifty or less.

"God makes the grass to grow greener while the farmer's at his dinner," is a proverb which may be applied to almost any enterprise, for optimism is largely a physical matter, and "it is ill talking with a hungry man."

I suppose that no man, even with the dullest imagination, can fail to walk across a wheat field at harvest without being reminded of some of the innumerable stories and allusions to corn fields in the Bible. He will remember how, when the famine was sore in the land of Canaan, Jacob sent his ten sons to Egypt to buy corn, and how Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew him not; with the touching details of his emotion, until he could no longer refrain himself, and, weeping, made himself known. How he bade them return, and bring their aged father, their little ones, and their flocks and herds, to dwell in the land of Goshen.

His mind, too, will revert to the commandment given to Moses, "When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest"; so that he will meet the villagers with a word of welcome, when they invade his fields for the same time-honoured purpose.

He will remember the story of Ruth and Boaz, told in the exquisite poetry of the Bible diction, than which nothing in the whole range of literature can compare in noble simplicity. And the corn fields of the New Testament, where the disciples plucked the ears of corn, and were encouraged, and the accusing Pharisees rebuked; with the conclusive declaration that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. And, finally, the familiar chapter in the burial service, which has brought comfort to thousands of mourners, and will so continue till the last harvest, which is the end of the world, when the angels will be the reapers.

The word "gleaning" is never heard in Worcestershire for collecting the scattered wheat stems and ears; it is invariably "leasing" from the Old English, *lesan*, to gather or collect anyhing. When wheat was fairly high in price the village women and children were in the field as soon as it was cleared of sheaves, and they made a pretty picture scattered about the golden stubble, and returning through the meadows and lanes at twilight with their ample gatherings.

The "leasings" would be thrashed by husband or brother with the old flail, in one of my barns, to be then ground at the village mill, and lastly baked into fragrant loaves of home-made bread—the "dusky loaf," as Tennyson says, "that smelt of home." One good old soul brought me every week, while the "leased corn" lasted, a small loaf called "a batch cake," and continued the gift later, made from wheat grown on the family allotment; her loaves were some of the best and the sweetest bread I have ever tasted.

"The man who makes two blades of grass grow where one grew before" is said to be a national benefactor, and, I suppose, the same adage applies *a fortiori* to wheat, but I have never seen a monument raised to his memory or even the circulation of the national hat for his benefit. Too often the only proof of his neighbour's recognition of his improved crops is the notification of an increased assessment of the amount of his liability to contribute to what is, still quite unsuitably, called the poor rate.

Wheat rejoices in a tropical summer, and it never succeeds better than when stiff land like mine splits into deep cracks, locally called "chawns." You can see the root-fibres crossing these cracks which go so far into the earth that a walking-stick can be inserted to touch the drain pipes in the furrows at a depth of 2½ or 3 feet. Apparently this cracking acts as a kind of root-pruning, and lets in the heat of the sun to the lower roots of the corn, with the result of, what is called, a great "cast" (yield) to the acre.

In building wheat ricks the most important point is to arrange the sheaves with the butts sloping outwards, so that should rain fall before thatching, the water will run away from the centre. I remember at Alton, where the rick-builder was an old and experienced man, he neglected this precaution; some weeks of heavy rain followed, but in time the thatching was completed, and nobody dreamed of any harm. When the thrashing machine arrived, and the ricks were uncovered, the wheat was found so damp that, in places, the ears had grown into solid mats, and the sheaves could only be parted by cutting with a hay-knife. The old man was so discomfited that the tears rolled down his cheeks, and the master's loss amounted to something like £300. There was not a sack of dry wheat on that particular farm that winter, though some was saleable at a reduced price. He told me that it was a costly business for him, but worth any money as a lesson to me. I took it to heart, and we never left a rick uncovered at Aldington; as fast as one was completed, and the builder descended the ladder, the thatcher took his place, and temporarily "hung" it with straw, secured by partially driven-in rick pegs until we could find time to attend to the regular thatching.

The high ridges and deep furrows, to be seen on the heavy arable lands of the Vale of Evesham, are a source of wonderment to people who come from light land districts, and who do not recognize how impervious is the subsoil to the penetration of water. The origin of these highly banked ridges dates from far-away days before land drain pipes were obtainable, and it was the only possible arrangement to prevent the perishing of crops from standing water in the winter. The rain quickly found its way into the furrows from the ridges, and, as they always sloped in the direction of the lowest part of the field, the superfluous water soon disappeared. Even now, when drain pipes are laid in the furrows, it is not advisable to level the ridges, because the water would take much longer to find the drains, and the growing crop would be endangered. It is not safe to drain this land deeper than about 2½ feet, and many thousands of pounds have been misapplied where draining has been done on money borrowed from companies who insist upon 3 feet as the minimum depth for any portion of the drain, which would mean much more than that where the drain occasionally passes through a stretch of rising ground. As proving my statement that 2½ feet is quite deep enough, I have seen great pools of water after a heavy rain standing exactly over the drain in the furrows, and we had sometimes to pierce the soil to the depth of the pipes, with an iron rod made for the purpose, before the water could get away.

On light land, the subsoil of which is often full of water, the case is quite different, and the pipes must be laid much deeper to relieve its water-logged condition; but on our stiff clay the subsoil was comparatively dry, and we had to provide only for the discharge of the surface water as quickly as possible, where the solid clay beneath prevented its sinking into the lower layers.

In the subsoil of the lias clay there are large numbers of a fossil shell, *Gryphea incurva*, known locally as " devils claws "; they certainly have a demoniac claw-like appearance, and worry the drainers by catching on the blade of the draining tool, and preventing its penetration into the clay.

I have heard the suggestion that our highly banked ridges were intended to increase the surface of the land available for the crops, just as it takes more cloth to cover a hump back than a normal one, but of course the rounded ridge does not provide any more *vertical position* for the crop, and the theory cannot be maintained. Some of these ridges, " lands " as they are called, are so wide and so elevated that it was said that two teams could pass each other in the furrows, on either side of a single " land," so hidden by the high ridge that they could not see one another; and I myself have noticed them on abandoned arable land that has been in grass from time immemorial, so high as nearly to answer the description. Though the blue clay in the Vale of Evesham is so tenacious, it works beautifully after a few sharp frosts, splitting up into laminations that form a splendidly mouldy seed bed, so that frost has been eloquently called " God's plough."

It is a very curious fact that many of these old " lands " take the form of a greatly elongated Ƨ (S backwards), though not so pronounced as that figure, for the curves are only visible towards the ends, and these curves always turn to the left of anyone walking towards the end. Various explanations have been given, and one by Lord Avebury is the nearest approach to a correct solution which I have seen, though not, I think, quite accurate. My own idea is that, as the plough turns each furrow-slice only to the right, the beginning of the ridge would be accomplished by two furrows thrown together on the top of each other, and the remainder would be gathered around them by continuing the process, until the " land " was formed with an open furrow on each side. The eight oxen would be harnessed in pairs, or the four horses tandem fashion. When they reached the end of each furrow-slice, the plough-boy, walking on the near side, would have to turn the long team on the narrow headland, and in order to get room to reach a position for starting the next furrow-slice, he would have to bear to the left before commencing the actual turn. In the meantime the horse next the plough would be completing the furrow-slice alone, and would, naturally, try to follow the other three horses towards the left, so that the furrow-slice at its end would slightly deviate from the straight line. When the horses were all turned, the second furrow-slice would follow the error in the first, and the same deviation would occur at each end of the ploughing, gradually becoming more and more pronounced, until the curved form of each ridge became apparent. Lord Avebury says that when the driver, walking on the near side, reached the end of each furrow, he found it easier to turn the team by pulling them round than by pushing them, thus accounting for the slight curvature.

The saying,

> "He that by the plough would thrive
> Himself must either hold or drive,"

is largely true, but only the small farmer can comply with it. The man of many acres cannot restrict his presence to one field, and must adopt for his motto the equally true proverb, "The master's eye does more than both his hands."

The thrashing-machine is the ultimate test of the yield or cast of the wheat crop, and it seems to have something itself to say about it. For when the straw is short the cast is generally good, and *vice versa.* In the first case the machine runs evenly, and gives out a contented and cheerful hum, but in the second it remonstrates with intermittent grunts and groans. Even when the yield is pretty good, the voice of the machine is not nearly so encouraging to the imaginative farmer, when prices are low, as when prices are up.

Throughout the course of my farming the gloomy note of the machine was that which predominated, but in the spring of 1877, on the prospect of complications with Russia, when wheat rose to I think nearly 70s. a quarter, it was again a cheerful sound, for I had several ricks of the previous year's crop on hand. I do not remember that bread rose to anything like the extent that occurred in the Great War. Forty years has marvellously widened the gap between the raw material and the finished product—that is, between producer and consumer; immense increases have taken place in the cost of labour employed by miller and baker, and rates and other expenses are much higher.

Farmers do not lose much in "bad debts"; they have to lay out their capital in cash payments so long before the return that they are not expected to give extended credit when sales take place, and for corn payment is made fourteen days after the sale is effected. I had one rather narrow escape. I had sold 150 sacks of wheat to a miller, and it had been delivered to the mill, but one evening I had a note from him to say that his credit was in question on the local markets. "A nod," I thought, "was as good as a wink to a blind horse"; so next morning I sent all my teams and waggons, and by night had carted all the wheat away, except twenty sacks, which had already been ground. The miller paid eventually 10s. in the £, so my loss was only a matter of about £10.

A similar "chap money," or return of a trifle in cash from seller to buyer, as that in vogue in horse-dealing, still exists in selling corn; it goes by the indefinite name of "custom," and in Worcestershire it was a fixed sum of 1s. in every sixty bushels of wheat, and 1s. in every eighty bushels of barley; each of these quantities formed the ancient load. I think the payment of "custom" arose when tarpaulin sheets were first used instead of straw to cover the waggon loads. The straw never returned; it was the miller's perquisite, and its value paid for the beer to which the carters were treated at the mill; but the tarpaulin comes back each time, so the miller gets his *quid pro quo* in the "custom."

Barley was not an important crop at Aldington, the land was too stiff, but I had some fields which contained limestone, where good crops could be grown. Even there it was inclined to coarseness, but in dry seasons sometimes proved a very nice bright and thin-skinned sample. Before the repeal of the malt tax, which was accompanied by legislation that permitted the brewers to use sugar, raw grain and almost anything, including, as people said, "old boots and shoes" instead of barley malt, good prices, up to 42s. a quarter and over, could be made; but under the new conditions, the maltsters complained that my barley was too good for them, and they could buy foreign stuff at about 22s. or 24s., which, with the help of sugar, produced a class of beer quite good enough for the Black Country and Pottery consumers.

I heard an amusing story about barley in Lincolnshire, some years before the repeal of the malt tax, which, I think, is worth recording. A farmer, after a very hot summer and dry harvest, had a good piece of barley which he offered by sample in Lincoln market. He could not make his price, the buyers complaining that it was too hard and flinty. He went home in disgust, but, after much pondering, thought he could see his way to meet the difficulty. He had the sacks of barley "shut" on his barn floor, in a heap, and several buckets of water poured over it. The heap was turned daily for a time, until the grain had absorbed all the water, and there was no sign of external moisture. The appearance of the barley was completely changed: the hard flinty look had vanished, and the grain presented a new plumpness and mellowness. He took a fresh sample to Lincoln next market day, and made 2s. or 3s. a quarter more than he had asked for it in its original condition.

The following lines, which have never been published except in a local newspaper, though written many years ago, apply quite well in these days of the hoped-for revival of agriculture. I am not at liberty to disclose the writer's identity beyond his initials, E. W.

FARMER NEWSTYLE AND FARMER OLDSTYLE

"Good day," said Farmer Oldstyle, taking Newstyle by the arm;
"I be cum to look aboit me, wilt 'ee show me o'er thy farm?"
Young Newstyle took his wideawake, and lighted a cigar,
And said, "Won't I astonish you, old-fashioned as you are!

"No doubt you have an aneroid? ere starting you shall see
How truly mine prognosticates what weather there will be."
"I ain't got no such gimcracks; but I knows there'll be a flush
When I sees th'oud ram tak shelter wi' his tail agen a bush."

"Allow me first to show you the analysis I keep,
And the compounds to explain of this experimental heap,
Where hydrogen and nitrogen and oxygen abound,
To hasten germination and to fertilize the ground."

"A putty sight o' learning you have piled up of a ruck;
The only name it went by in my feyther's time was muck.
I knows not how the tool you call a nallysis may work,
I turns it when it's rotten pretty handy wi' a fork."

"A famous pen of Cotswolds, pass your hand along the back,
Fleeces fit for stuffing the Lord Chancellor's woolsack!
For premiums e'en 'Inquisitor' would own these wethers *are* fit,
If you want to purchase good uns you must go to Mr. Garsit.[1]

"Two bulls first rate, of different breeds, the judges all protest
Both are so super-excellent, they know not which is best.
Fair[1] could he see this Ayrshire, would with jealousy be riled;
That hairy one's a Welshman, and was bred by Mr. Wild."[1]

"Well, well, that little hairy bull, he shanna be so bad:
But what be yonder beast I hear, a-bellowing like mad,
A-snorting fire and smoke out? be it some big Roosian gun!
Or be it twenty bullocks squez together into one?"

"My steam factotum, that, Sir, doing all I have to do,
My ploughman and my reaper, and my jolly thrasher, too!
Steam's yet but in its infancy, no mortal man alive
Can tell to what perfection modern farming will arrive."

"Steam as yet is but an infant"—he had scarcely said the word,
When through the tottering farmstead was a loud explosion heard;
The engine dealing death around, destruction and dismay;
Though steam be but an infant this indeed was no child's play.

The women screamed like blazes, as the blazing hayrick burned,
The sucking pigs were in a crack, all into crackling turned;
Grilled chickens clog the hencoop, roasted ducklings choke the gutter,
And turkeys round the poultry yard on devilled pinions flutter.

Two feet deep in buttermilk the stokers two feet lie,
The cook before she bakes it finds a finger in the pie;
The labourers for their lost legs are looking round the farm,
They couldn't lend a hand because they had not got an arm.

Oldstyle all soot, from head to foot, looked like a big black sheep,
Newstyle was thrown upon his own experimental heap;
"That weather-glass," said Oldstyle, "canna be in proper fettle,
Or it might as well a tow'd us there was thunder in the kettle."

"Steam is so expansive." "Aye," said Oldstyle, "so I see.
So expensive, as you call it, that it winna do for me;
According to my notion, that's a beast that canna pay,
Who champs up for his morning feed a hundred ton of hay."

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[1] Celebrated breeders of the respective sorts.

Then to himself, said Oldstyle, as he homewards quickly went,
"I'll tak' no farm where doctors' bills be heavier than the rent;
I've never in hot water been, steam shanna speed my plough,
I'd liefer thrash my corn out by the sweat of my own brow.

"I neither want to scald my pigs, nor toast my cheese, not I,
Afore the butcher sticks 'em or the factor comes to buy;
They shanna catch me here again to risk my limbs and loife;
I've nought at whoam to blow me up except it be my woif."

CHAPTER XVIII

HOPS—INSECT ATTACKS—HOP FAIRS

> "Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
> Where most it promises; and oft it hits
> Where hope is coldest and despair most fits."
> *All's Well that Ends Well.*

In a very rare black-letter book on hop culture, *A Perfite Platforme of a Hoppe Garden*, published in the year 1578 and therefore over 340 years old, the author, Reynolde Scot, has the following quaint remarks on one of the disorders to which the hop plant is liable:

"The hoppe that liketh not his entertainment, namely his seat, his ground, his keeper, or the manner of his setting, comith up thick and rough in leaves, very like unto a nettle; and will be much bitten with a little black flye, who, also, will not do harme unto good hoppes, who if she leave the leaf as full of holes as a nettle, yet she seldome proceedeth to the utter destruction of the Hoppe; where the garden standeth bleake, the heat of summer will reform this matter."

Thomas Tusser, who lived 1515 to 1580, in his *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, included many seasonable verses on Hop-growing, among which the following are worth quoting:

May.

Get into thy hop-yard for now it is time
  To teach Robin Hop on his pole how to climb,
To follow the sun, as his property is,
  And weed him and trim him if aught go amiss.

June.

Whom fancy perswadeth among other crops,
  To have for his spending sufficient of hops:
Must willingly follow of choices to chuse
  Such lessons approved, as skilfull do use.

Ground gravelly, sandy, and mixed with clay,
Is naughty for hops, any manner of way;
Or if it be mingled with rubbish and stone,
For dryness and barrenness let it alone.

Chuse soil for the hop of the rottenest mould,
Well dunged and wrought as a garden plot should:
Not far from the water (but not overflown),
This lesson well noted is meet to be known.

The sun in the south, or else southly and west,
Is joy to the hop, as welcomed ghest:
But wind in the north, or else northerly east,
To hop is as ill, as a fray in a feast.

Meet plot for a hop-yard, once found as is told,
Make thereof account, as of jewell of gold:
Now dig it and leave it the sun for to burn,
And afterward fence it to serve for that turn.

The hop for his profit, I thus do exalt,
It strengtheneth drink and it favoureth malt,
And being well brewed, long kept it will last,
And drawing abide, if ye draw not too fast.

In Worcestershire and Herefordshire hop-gardens are always called hop-yards, which seems to be only a local and more ancient form of the same word, and from the same root. The termination occurs also in "orchard"—from the Anglo-Saxon *ortgeard* (a wort-yard)—"olive-yard," and "vineyard."

The quotation from the *Perfite Platforme of a Hoppe Garden* refers to "a little black flye," now called "the flea" (Worcestershire plural "flen"), really a beetle like the "turnip fly," and it is the first pest that attacks the hop every year.

"First the flea, then the fly,
Then the lice, and then they die,"

is a couplet repeated in all the hop districts to-day, but the damage done by the flea is not to be compared to that caused by the next pest, the fly. The latter is one of the numerous species of aphis which begins its attack in the winged state, and after producing wingless green lice in abundance—which further increase by the process known as "gemmation"—reappears with wings in the final generation of the lice, and hibernates in readiness for its visitation in the spring next year.

So long as the hop plant maintains its health the aphis is comparatively harmless, for the plant is then able to elaborate to the full the bitter principle which is its natural protection. On a really hot day in July it is sometimes possible to detect the distinctive scent of the hop quite plainly in walking through the plantation, long before any hops appear, and when this is noticeable very little of the aphis blight can be found. There is however nearly always a small sprinkling lying in wait, and a few days of unsuitable weather will reduce the vitality of the plant so that the blight immediately begins to increase.

There is little doubt that all the distinctive principles of plants or trees have been evolved, and are in perfect health elaborated, as a protection from their most destructive insect or fungoid enemies; just as physical protective equipment, such as thorns, prickles, and stinging apparatus, is produced by other plants or trees as safeguards against more powerful foes. If it were not so, plants that are even now seriously damaged and kept in check by such pests would long ago have become extinct.

Pursuing this theory it seems likely that the solanin of the potato is its natural protection against the disease caused by the fungus *Phytophthora infestans*. The idea is suggested by the invariably increasing liability to the potato disease experienced as new sorts become old. The new kinds of potatoes are produced from the seed—not the tubers—of the old varieties, and the seed, when fully vitalized and capable of germination, may be assumed to contain the maximum potentiality for transmission of the active principle to the tubers immediately descended from it. During the early years of their existence these revitalized tubers contain so much solanin that they are not only injurious, but more or less poisonous, to man, and it is only after they have been cultivated, and have produced further generations of tubers *from* tubers, that they become eatable, showing that in the tuber condition the plant gradually loses its efficient protection.

In the case of the hop the most effective remedy is a solution of quassia and soft soap. The caustic potash in the soap neutralizes the oily integument of the lice and dries them up, but the quassia supplies a bitter principle not unlike that of the hop, though without its grateful aroma, which acts as a protection in the absence of the bitter of the hop itself. So closely does the hop bitter resemble that of quassia, that in seasons of hop failure it is said to be employed as a substitute in brewing, and at one time its use for that purpose was prohibited by law.

As a further proof that the bitter principle of the hop is distasteful to the aphis, it is noticeable that when the fly first arrives it always attacks the topmost shoots of the bine where the leaves have not developed, and where the active principle is likely to be weakest. The same position is selected by the aphis of the rose, the bean, and every plant or tree subject to aphis attack—it is the undeveloped and therefore unprotected part which is chosen.

It is remarkable that when a destructive blight is proceeding—generally in a wet and cold time—and a sudden change occurs to really hot dry weather, the hop plant often recovers its tone automatically, shakes off the disease, and the blight dies away, a fact which strengthens the assumption that in normal weather the plant can protect itself. Again, the blight is always most persistent under the shade of trees or tall hedges, or where the bine is over luxuriant, when owing to the exclusion of light and air the plant is unable to elaborate its natural safeguard.

Fertilizers not well balanced as to their constituents, and containing an excess of nitrogen, act as stimulants without supplying the minerals necessary for perfect health. The effect is the same as that produced in man by an excess of alcohol and a deficiency of nourishing food, the health of the subject suffers in both cases, leaving a predisposition to disease.

Reasoning by analogy, these causes affecting the success or failure of plants give us the clue to the remedies for bacterial disease in man. Disease is the consequence and penalty of life under unnatural or unfavourable conditions, which should first receive attention and improvement. When in spite of improved conditions disease persists, specifics must be sought. The conditions which produce disease in the vegetable world are fought by the active principle of each plant, and inasmuch as the germ diseases of man are probably, though distantly, related to those which affect vegetable life, the specific protections of plants should be exploited for the treatment of human complaints. This, of course, has for long been a practice, but possibly more success might be achieved by careful research to identify each distinct bacterial disease in man with its co-related distinct disease in plants, so as to utilize as a remedy for the former the natural protection which the latter indicates.

Our artificially evolved domesticated plants are more subject to disease than their wild prototypes, because they are not natural survivals of the fittest. They are survivals only by virtue of the art of man, inducing special properties pleasing to man's senses, and therefore profitable for sale; but in the development of some such special excellence, ability to elaborate protective defence is generally neglected, and the special excellence produced may possibly be antagonistic to the really sound constitution of the plant. It is thus that cultivated plants are more in need of watchful care and attention than their wild relations, and that, in the development of quality, a sacrifice of quantity may be involved.

The observant hop grower notices constant changes in the appearance of his plants from day to day under varying weather influences and other conditions: a retarded and unhappy expression in a cold, wet and rough time;

an eager and hopeful expansiveness under genial conditions; a dark, plethoric and rampant growth where too much nitrogen is available, and a brilliant and healthily-restrained normality when properly balanced nourishment is provided.

There should be sympathy between the grower and his plants, such as is described by Blackmore in his *Christowell;* though in the following passage with consummate art he puts the words into the mouth of the sympathetic daughter of the amateur vine-grower, and gives the plant the credit of the first advance:

"'For people to talk about "sensitive plants,"' she says, 'does seem such sad nonsense, when every plant that lives is sensitive. Just look at this holly-leafed baby vine, with every point cut like a prickle, yet much too tender and good to prick me. It follows every motion of my hand; it crisps its little veinings up whenever I come near it; and it feels in every fibre that I am looking at it.'"

Blackmore was much more than a writer of fiction; I think he had a deeper insight into the spirit of Nature and country character than perhaps any writer of modern times; he combined the accuracy of the scholar with the practical knowledge of the farmer and gardener; the logic of the philosopher with the fancy and expression of the poet. I regard the appreciation of his *Lorna Doone*—a book in which one can smell the violets—as the test of a real country lover; I mean a country lover who, besides the gift of acute observation, has the deeper gift of imaginative perception. If only the book could have been illustrated by the pencil of Randolph Caldecott, such a union of sympathy between author and artist would have produced a work unparalleled in rural literature.

Like all insects the aphis has its special insect enemies, among which the lady-bird ("lady-cow" in Worcestershire) is the most important. It lays its eggs in clusters on the hop-leaf, and in a few days the larvæ (called "niggers") are hatched, aggressive-looking creatures with insatiable appetites. It is amusing to watch them hunting over the lower side of the leaf like a sporting dog in a turnip field, and devouring the lice in quantities. I knew an old hop grower in Hampshire who had a standing offer of a guinea a quart for lady-birds, but it is scarcely necessary to add that the reward was never claimed.

The hop is diœcious (producing male and female blossoms on separate plants), but very rarely both can be found on the same stem—the plant thus becoming monœcious. In 1893, a very hot dry year, several specimens were found, including one in Kent, one in Surrey, one in Herefordshire, and one in my own hop-yards at Aldington. It is curious that the same unusual season should have produced the same abnormality in places so far apart, practically representing all the hop districts of the country.

"Till James's Day be past and gone,
You might grow hops or you might grow none."

St. James's Day is July 25, and so uncertain was the crop in the days before insecticides were in use, that the saying fairly represents the specially speculative nature of the crop in former times. As an instance of the effects of varying years I had the uncommon experience of picking two crops in twelve months: the first in a very late season when the picking did not commence till after Worcester hop-fair day, September 19th, and the second the following year when picking was unusually early, and was completed before the fair day. At Farnham, where many of the tradespeople indulged in a little annual flutter as small hop growers, in addition to a more regular source of income from their respective trades, it was said that the first question on meeting each other was not, "How are you?" but "How are *they?*"

Hop-picking is always somewhat reminiscent of the

Saturnalia; with hundreds of strangers from distant villages and a few gipsies and tramps, it is not possible to enforce strict discipline, for it is very necessary to keep the people in good-humour. On the final day of the picking they expect to be allowed to indulge in a good deal of horse-play, the great joke being suddenly to upset an unpopular individual into a crib among the hops. Shrieks of laughter greet the disappearance of the unlucky one, of whom nothing is to be seen except a struggling leg protruding from the crib.

The last operation in the hop garden is stacking the poles, and burning the bine, a most inflammable material which makes a prodigious blaze. As the men watch the leaping flames the same remark is made year after year—" fire is a good servant, but a bad master." These fires seem a great waste of good fibrous matter, as in former times the bine was utilized for making coarse sacking and brown paper. During the war I suggested to the National Salvage Council that, owing to the scarcity of both these articles, it might be worth while to attempt the resuscitation of the manufacture. The suggestion was followed by experiments which produced quite a useful brown paper of which I received a sample, but the cost of treatment was unfortunately prohibitive from the commercial point of view.

Worcester hop fair is the start of the trade, and the market is held behind the Hop-Pole Hotel, where there are spacious stores and offices for the merchants. When the crop is bountiful the stores are filled to overflowing, and the ancient Guildhall built in 1721 has to be requisitioned. On either side of the doorway stand the statues of Carolus I. and Carolus II., who must have watched the entrance and the exit of innumerable pockets. Worcester is distinguished as the Faithful City, for like the County it had small use for Cromwell and his Roundheads; and to this day, on the date of the restoration of Charles II.—" the twenty-ninth of May, oak apple day "—a spray of oak or an oak-apple is in some villages worn as a badge of loyalty, the penalty for non-observance being a stroke on the hands with a stinging-nettle.

It was a great relief to get away from my 300 pickers and ride the eighteen miles to Worcester on my bicycle, through the lovely river scenery of the Vale of Evesham, the hedges drooping beneath the weight of brilliant berries, the orchards loaded with apples, the clean bright stubbles, and the cattle in the lush aftermath; then, after a visit to the busy hop-market and a stroll among the curio shops in New Street, to return by a different road as the shadows were lengthening beside the copses and the hedgerow timber trees.

In former times the October fair at Weyhill, near Andover, was the market for the Hampshire and Farnham hops; it was the custom for the growers to send them by road, and load back with cheese brought to the fair by the Wiltshire farmers. I heard of a Hampshire grower, who in a year of great scarcity had spent some time trying to sell several pockets to an anxious but reluctant buyer, unwilling to give the price asked—£20 a hundredweight. They continued the deal in the evening at the inn at Andover, where both were staying, and said "Good-night" without having concluded the bargain. The grower was in bed and almost asleep when he heard a knock at his door, and a voice, "Give you £18," which he refused. Next morning trade was dull and the buyer would not repeat his offer, and at the end of the week the grower sent his hops home again. Prices continued to fall, until two years later he sold the same lot at 5s. a hundredweight to a cunning speculator, who took them out to sea, after claiming a return of the duty (about £1 a hundredweight originally paid by the grower), which the Excise refunded on *exported* hops. The hops went overboard of course, and the buyer netted the difference between the price he paid and the amount received for the refunded duty.

At these old fairs the showmen and gipsies take large sums in the "pleasure" departments for admission to their exhibitions—swings, roundabouts, shooting-galleries, and coco-nut shies. In Evesham Post-Office a gipsy woman once asked me to write a letter; she handed me an order for £10, and instructed me to send it to a London firm for £5 worth of best coco-nuts and £5 worth of seconds. They were for use on the shies; it struck me as a large supply, and the economical division of the qualities as ingenious.

CHAPTER XIX

METEOROLOGY—ETON AND HARROW AT LORD'S—"RUS IN URBE"

"But if I praised the busy town,
He loved to rail against it still,
For 'ground in yonder social mill
We rub each other's angles down,

"'And merge,' he said, 'in form and gloss
The picturesque of man and man.'"
In Memoriam.

During the terribly wet summer of 1879 the following lines were written—it was said by the then Bishop of Wakefield—in the visitors' book at the White Lion Hotel at Bala, in Wales:

"The weather depends on the moon, as a rule,
And I've found that the saying is true;
For at Bala it rains when the moon's at the full,
And it rains when the moon's at the new.

"When the moon's at the quarter, then down comes the rain;
At the half it's no better I ween;
When the moon's at three-quarters it's at it again,
And it rains besides mostly between."

Rather hard on Bala, for the summer was so abnormally wet that these lines would have been true of any part of England. I suppose everybody is more or less interested in the weather, but the custom of alluding to the obvious, as an opening to conversation, is probably a survival from the time when everyone was directly interested in its effect upon agriculture.

Nothing proves how completely town interests now dominate those of the country so much as the innovation called "summer time." During the war it was no doubt a boon to allotment holders, and of course it gives a longer evening to those employed all day indoors; but it inflicts direct loss on the farmer, who is practically forced to adopt it in order to supply the towns with produce in time for their altered habits. The farmer exchanges the last hour of the normal day, one of the most valuable in the old working time, for the first hour of the new day, one of the most useless, for owing to the dew which the sun has not had time to dry up, many agricultural operations cannot be properly performed or even commenced—hay-making and corn-hoeing for instance are impossible. We may be sure that the former times of beginning and ending farm-work, which I suppose had been customary for at least 2,000 years in England, did not receive the sanction of such a period without good reason, and it seems to me, that so far as outdoor work is concerned the new arrangement savours of "teaching our grandmothers to suck eggs."

There is a saving of lighting requirements, no doubt, but in such a six weeks of winterly mornings as we had, following the commencement of "summer time" this first year of peace, there is a considerable increase in the consumption of fuel. Wherever possible, I suppose, most houses are built to face the south, and the breakfast-room would be generally on that side, so that by 9 o'clock, old time, the sun had warmed the room, but at 9 o'clock, new time, the sun has scarcely looked in at the window; a fire is probably lighted and to save trouble kept up all day. If the new arrangement is continued, and I understand that it was tried more than 100 years ago and abandoned as a mistake, it would be much better to begin it at least a month later. Our present May Day is nearly a fortnight earlier than before the New Style was introduced, which is the reason why old traditions of May Day merry-makings appear unseasonable; and probably the promoters of summer time have not heard of "blackthorn winter" and "whitethorn winter," which, in the country, we experience regularly every year in April and May.

"When the grass grows in Janiveer
It grows the worse for it all the year,"

and

"If Candlemas-Day be fine and fair
The half of winter's to come and mair;
If Candlemas-Day be wet and foul
The half of winter was gone at Yule,"

are both rhymes suggesting the probability of wintry weather to follow, if the early weeks of the year are mild and unseasonable, and they may be considered as generally correct prognostications. A neighbouring village had the distinction of possessing a weather prophet, with the reputation also of an astrologer; he could be seen when the stars were gleaming brightly, late at night, gazing upwards and making his deductions, though, in reality, I fancy, his inspiration came from the study of almanacs which profess to foretell the future. He was quiet and reserved, with a spare figure, dark complexion, and an abstracted expression. Occasionally I could induce him to talk, but he did not like to be "drawn." He told me, as one of his original conceptions, that he thought the good people were accommodated in the after-life within the limits of the stars of good influence, and that the wicked had to be content with those of an opposite character.

The proverb about March dust, and "A dry March and a dry May for old England," are both apposite, for they are busy months on the land, and a wet March amounts to a national disaster; but everyone forgives April when showery, for we all know that "April showers bring forth May flowers." Shakespeare, too, says:

"When daffodils begin to peer,
With heigh! the doxy over the dale,
Why, then comes in the sweet of the year."

A charming sentiment and charmingly rendered, but possibly more accurate when the Old Style was in vogue, and the seasons were nearly a fortnight later than now.

The modern "daffys" too, no doubt, "begin to peer" somewhat earlier than those of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

During a very hot summer I suggested to the Board of Agriculture that it might be worth while to experiment with explosions of artillery, with a view of inducing the clouds to discharge the rain they evidently contain when they keep passing day after day without bursting. I had seen it stated that many great battles had ended in tremendous downpours, and that it was believed that the rain was caused by concussion from the explosions. The Board replied, however, that experiments had been conducted in America for the purpose, without in any way substantiating the theory; and the experiences of the Great War have since conclusively proved that it has no foundation.

As to weather signs, I have already quoted the original pronouncement of my carpenter, T. G., that "the indications for rain are very similar to the indications for fine weather," and there is a good deal in his words. My own conclusion, after fifty years of out-door life on the farm, in the woods, in the garden, at out-door games, and on the roads, is that fine weather brings fine weather, and wet weather brings wet weather, in other words, it never rains but it pours, in an extended sense.

My impression is that when the ground is dry there is a minimum of capillary attraction between it and the clouds, and though the sky may look threatening they do not easily break into rain. On the other hand, when the ground is thoroughly wet and evaporation is active, capillary attraction tends to unite earth and clouds, and rain results. We all know that hill-tops receive showers which frequently pass over the vales without falling, probably because of the greater proximity of the hills. In a long drought a violent thunderstorm, which soaks the ground, will often be followed by a complete change of weather, as the result of contact established between the earth and the clouds.

The best description I know of a really hot and cloudless day is that by Coleridge in the *Ancient Mariner :*

> "The sun came up upon the left,
> Out of the sea came he;
> And he shone bright, and on the right
> Went down into the sea."

The succession of monosyllables expresses most forcibly the monotony of a day of blazing sunshine, unruffled by a cloud; and the absence of incident illustrates the remorseless march of the dominant sun across the heavens.

Very little of my time has been spent in London or any other town, and my early recollections of passing through London on my way to or from school after or before the holidays are of very depressing weather conditions—fog, greasy streets and pavements, or a sun veiled in a haze of smoky vapour. Even when I went to Lord's annually in July to see the Eton and Harrow match my recollection of the weather is of dull, sultry heat and oppression of spirits. Cricket never seemed the same game as I knew and loved at Harrow, or in my own home in Surrey; there was an unreality about it, and a black coat and top hat were insufferably uncongenial.

I am able, as an eye-witness on one of these occasions, to write of an incident which, I think, has been almost forgotten. It was within a year of the marriage of King Edward, then Prince of Wales, and Queen Alexandra. A ball had been hit almost to the boundary, but was stopped by a spectator close to the ropes, thrown in to the fielder, and smartly returned to the wicket-keeper. The batsmen took it for granted that it was a boundary hit, and were changing ends when, one man being out of his ground, the wicket was put down, the wicket-keeper not recognizing that the ball was "dead." The umpire gave the man "out." The man demurred, and immediately shouts arose on all sides: "Out!" "Not out!" "Out!" "Not out!" "Out!" "Not out!" rising *in crescendo* to a pitch of intense excitement. The boys watching the match, and the other spectators, some agreeing with, and some disputing the verdict, rushed into the centre of the ground, and completely blocked the open space still shouting vociferously. When the turmoil was at its height the carriage of the Prince and Princess was driven on to the ground; one of the players rushed up excitedly, and asked the Prince to decide the matter. The Prince had not seen the incident, and of course declined, as no doubt he would have done under any circumstances, to give an opinion. It was impossible to clear the ground and continue the play that evening, and stumps were drawn for the day. Next morning the fielding side offered the disgusted batsman to continue his innings, but he decided to play the game and abide by the umpire's decision. I forget whether Eton or Harrow was in the field at the time, and after this lapse of years it does not matter. The headmaster always sent a notice round, just before the match, to be read to every form, that the boys were desired not to indulge in any "ironical cheering" at Lord's; this was his euphemism for what we called "chaff," and I fear that on this occasion the warning was disregarded even more completely than usual.

As a child, I generally paid a visit to London with my brothers and sisters during the Christmas holidays to see a pantomime, and I remember an occasion when returning from Covent Garden Theatre after a matinée we all—nine of us—walked over Waterloo Bridge and paid nine halfpennies toll—a circumstance that had never happened before, and never happened again.

In the days before the railway was made between Alton and Farnham the old bailiff on the Will Hall Farm at Alton, who, though quite an elderly man, had never visited London, expressed a wish to visit it for once in his life. His master gave him a holiday and paid his expenses, and the old man drove the ten miles to Farnham Station. Arrived in London he started to walk over Waterloo Bridge, but the further he got the more astonished he became at the traffic, and began to wonder what "fair" all the people could be going to. Feeling very much out of his element he reached the Strand, and looking up and down he saw still greater crowds of passengers and the unending procession of 'buses, cabs, and vans. He became so confused and alarmed that he turned round, went straight back to Waterloo Station, and left by the first available train. He came home disgusted with London, and in an account of the traffic and the people, ended by saying, "I never saw such a place in my life; I couldn't even get a bit of anything to eat until I got back to Farnham."

This old man was called "the Great Western": I suppose his bulk and commanding figure were reminiscent of the power and energy of one of the locomotives on that line. He wore a very wide-brimmed straw hat, and a vast expanse of waistcoat with sleeves, without a coat over it, and he had a very determined and masterful habit of speech. Caldecott's sketch of Ready-Money Jack in *Bracebridge Hall* always recalls him to my mind.

He must have been born before the opening of the nineteenth century, for he could remember the stirring events of its early years. Any remark about unusual weather made in his hearing was at once put out of court by his recollections of "eiteen-eiteen" (1818), which seems to have been a very remarkable year for maxima and minima of meteorology. He could remember the high price of wheat during the war which ended at Waterloo, and how his old master, the grandfather of the tenant of the farm in my time, would stand by the men in the barn as they measured up the wheat, bushel by bushel, to fill the sacks, and exclaim as each bushel was poured in, "There goes another guinea, boys!" This would make the price 168s. a quarter; I find the average recorded for 1812 was 126s. 6d., so that it is quite possible that for a time in that year in places 168s. was realized; which leaves us little to grumble at in the price of 80s. during the greatest war in history.

His horizon must have been considerably widened by his brief visit to London; previous to that event it might have been nearly as extensive as that of the hero of a recent story of Pwllheli. Meeting a crony in the town, he remarked that the streets of London would be pretty crowded that day. "How's that?" said his friend. "Why, there's a trip train gone up to-day with fourteen people from Pwllheli!"

Bredon Hill, in the Vale of Evesham, is the direction in which many people look for hints of coming changes of weather.

> "When Bredon Hill puts on his cap
> Ye men of the vale beware of that"

is a well-known proverb referring to the dark curtain of rain clouds obscuring the top, which is generally followed by heavy rain and floods in the Avon meadows and those of all the little streams which join that river. The same purple curtain can be seen on the Cotswolds above Broadway, and is likewise the forerunner of floods in the Vale:

> "When you see the rain on the hills
> You'll shortly find it down by the mills."

There is, too, the beautiful blue hazy distance one sees in very fine weather, which gives a feeling of mystery and remoteness and unexplored possibilities. I lately read somewhere of a man who had passed his life without leaving his native village, though he had often looked far away into the blue distance, and longed to start upon a journey of discovery; for its invitation seemed an assurance that in such beauty there must be something better than he had ever experienced in his own home. There came a day when the appeal was so insistent that he braced himself to the effort, and after many weary miles reached the place of his dreams, only to find that the blue distance had disappeared. Meeting a passer-by he told him of his journey and its object, and of his disappointment, "Look behind you," was the reply. He looked, and behold! over the very spot he had left in the morning—over his own home—the blue haze hung, as a veil of beauty, with its exquisite promise. There is a moral and there is comfort in this tale for him who fancies that he is the victim of circumstances and surroundings. That is the man who, as my bailiff used to say in harvest, has always got a heavier cut of wheat than his neighbour in the same field, and is always finding himself "at the wrong job."

CHAPTER XX

CHANGING COURSE OF STREAMS—DEWPONDS—A WET HARVEST—WEATHER PHENOMENA—WILL-O'-THE-WISP—VARIOUS

" There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O Earth, what changes hast thou seen !"
In Memoriam.

" With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

" I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever."
The Brook.

Living so many years in one place I had unusual opportunities, as my rounds nearly always took me beside my brooks, of watching their slowly changing courses. The roots of the pollard willows helped to keep them to their regular path by holding up the banks, but sometimes when an old tree fell into the water it had an opposite result. A fallen tree, reaching partly across the stream, has the immediate effect of damming the flow of the water on the side of its growth and diverting the current towards the opposite bank in a narrowed but more powerful advance, so that the bank is worn away and the beginning of a bend is formed. As the breach increases, the water, momentarily retarded there by the new concavity, rushes forward again in the direction of the bank from which the tree fell. So that a second concavity is produced on that side some little way below the tree, resulting in the slow formation of an extended S-like figure, or hook with a double bend. The collection of rubbish and sediment retained by the fallen tree helps to form a new bank on that side, extending further into the stream than the bank on which the tree originally stood.

As this process continues it is easy to see that a straight stretch of stream will in time assume a winding course, and the stream will be continually altering its path, so that large areas of flat meadows will be formed, every part of which has at times been the stream's course. How many ages, then, must it have taken to produce the level meadows we see extending for immense distances on either side of our big rivers, and even those adjoining quite small streams? The level surface thus created by the river or brook's course perpetually deflected and reflected, is finally completed by the floods bringing down a deposit of soil in solution, which is precipitated and settles into any surface irregularities left by the wanderings of the stream. A faint conception of an absolutely illimitable cycle of years, during which the whole extent of visible flat meadow has been again and again eroded and restored, is thus conveyed.

Confirmation of this alteration of their courses by streams is afforded when we cut a main drain through one of these meadows, to carry the water from the connected furrow drains of adjoining arable land. The alluvial soil can be found as deep as the depth of the present brook, free from the stones found in the arable land, and containing, to the same depth as the brook, fresh water shells similar to those in the brook to-day. There was a bend in course of formation in one of my brooks, where the stump of a tree, whose fall was the starting-point, could be seen standing in the newly-formed ground, a yard or more from the stream when I left, though I can remember when it was so near as almost to touch the water.

If we form an S from a piece of wire, and pinch it together from top to bottom, the loops become so flattened, S, that one of them may almost unite with the central curve. The same thing often happens in the loops of a brook, and, in time, the stream will complete the junction, forming a short circuit.[1] Thus an island may be formed; or when the old loop opposite the short circuit gets filled up with deposit or falling banks—the water preferring the short circuit—a piece of land may be cut off from one of the former sides of the brook and transferred to the other, so that where the brook is a boundary between two owners or parishes one owner or parish may be robbed and the other owner or parish becomes a receiver of stolen goods. There was an instance of this on the farm I owned and occupied adjoining the Aldington Manor property, and the owner and the tenant of the piece transferred to my side could not reach it without walking through the brook. In this case, however, the tenant had wisely planted the ground with withies, which he managed to get at for lopping when its turn came round every seven years. Thus we have an example of the necessity of the ancient practice of beating the bounds, which, at least before the days of ordnance surveys, was not merely an opportunity for a holiday.

Another proof of the creation of new land by the meanderings of a stream is found in the ancient "carrs" of North Lincolnshire, near Brigg, where the hollowed-out logs of black bog oak, which formed the canoes of the ancient inhabitants, are sometimes discovered many feet below the surface, and long distances from the present course of the Ancholme. These having sunk to the bottom of the river in past ages, and gradually become covered with alluvium, were left behind as the river changed its course. In some cases however these canoes may have sunk to the bottom of the water when it formed a lake, and the lake having gradually silted up, the river receded to something like its present width.

The floods in the Vale of Evesham from the Avon and even from my brooks, often converted the adjoining flat meadows into lakes, and they rose so suddenly after heavy rains or the melting of deep snowfalls on the hills, that they were attended with danger to the stock.

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[1] See note at end of chapter, p. 252.

In the summer of 1879 one of these sudden floods occurred, and people standing on Evesham bridge, saw fallen trees and hay-cocks floating down the stream. A pollard willow was noticed with a crew of about twenty land rats, which had found refuge there until the tree itself was lifted by the rising water and carried down the stream; and a floating hay-cock supported a man's jacket, his jar of cider, and his "shuppick." The local word "shuppick," a corruption of "sheaf-pike," means a pike used for loading the sheaves of wheat in the harvest field on to the waggon, and is the "fork" in general use at hay-making. During another summer flood the whole of the pleasure ground at Evesham, beside the Avon, was under water several feet deep; the water poured in at the lower windows of the adjoining hotel, and the proprietor's casks of beer and cider in the cellars, ready for the regatta, were lifted from their stands and bumped against walls and ceilings.

Every parish has its Council in these days, and in country places almost every other person one meets is a councillor of some sort, and inclined to be proud of the distinction. These Councils are excellent safety-valves for parochial malcontents who thus harmlessly let off superfluous steam which might otherwise ruffle the abiding calm of peaceful inhabitants, but their powers are really very limited. In a village in Worcestershire where an approach road crossed a brook by a ford, during floods the current was sometimes so strong as to constitute a danger to horses and carts. The village pundits therefore, in council duly assembled, considered the matter, and after an extended debate the following resolution was carried unanimously, "That a notice board be erected on the spot bearing the inscription: When this board *is covered with water* it is dangerous to attempt to cross the ford."

The numerous brooks in the Vale of Evesham supply ample water for the stock, but in more elevated parts, especially on the chalk Downs of Sussex, Hants, Wilts, and Dorset, provision is made for an artificial water supply by what are called "dewponds." A shallow saucer-shaped depression is dug out on the open Down, the bottom being made water-tight by puddling with a well-rammed layer of impervious clay. The first heavy rainfall fills the pond, and, the water being colder than the air, the dew or mist condenses on its surface sufficiently, in ordinary weather, to maintain the supply. In a dry time the sheep can always reach the water, the pond having no banks, by the shelving formation of the bottom. Sometimes a few trees are allowed to grow round it; they also act as condensers, and their drip helps to fill the pond. It is only in an abnormal drought that these dewponds really fail, and a thunderstorm, followed by ordinary weather, will soon refill them. Gilbert White, in *The Natural History of Selborne,* refers to these ponds in a very interesting letter on the subject, including details of condensation by trees, in which he gives an instance of a particular pond, high up on the Down, 300 feet above his house, and situated in such a position that it was impossible for it to receive any water from springs or drainage, which "though never above three feet deep in the middle, and not more than thirty feet in diameter, and containing, perhaps, not more than two or three hundred hogsheads of water, yet never is known to fail, though it affords drink for three hundred or four hundred sheep, and for at least twenty head of large cattle besides."

The natural well-water in the Vale of Evesham is exceedingly hard, and in the town and some villages was formerly much contaminated. After great opposition from obstructive ratepayers, a splendid supply was obtained from the Cotswolds above Broadway, about six miles away, of much softer and really pure spring water. It comes in pipes by gravitation, so there is no expense of pumping; but it was difficult to get recalcitrant ratepayers to lay the water on from the mains to their houses, as that part of the cost had to be borne by them individually; and, before compulsion could be resorted to, the Council had to prove contamination of the wells and close them. To get the evidence samples were submitted to a London analyst, and they were invariably condemned. One of the Councillors suggested sending, with a number of well samples, a sample of the new supply "for a fad." The samples were numbered, but had no other distinguishing mark, and in due course the usual condemnations were received, including that of the new town supply!

During the wet harvest of 1879, when what was called by townspeople the agricultural depression, was becoming acute, it was impossible to get a whole day on which wheat could be carried. The position was serious, because the grain was sprouting in the sheaves in the field, and time after time a fairly dry Saturday would have allowed carrying the following day, though Monday was always as wet as ever. At last at Aldington we faced the situation and decided to proceed with the work whenever possible, Sunday or no Sunday. A fine drying Saturday occurred, and my bailiff told the men what we proposed, adding that we did not wish anyone to help who had scruples as to the day. They all appeared on Sunday morning, a brilliant day, except one "conscientious objector," who, as I heard later, spent most of the day at the public-house. We got up two ricks from about ten acres, which eventually proved to be some of the driest wheat we had that year, and which I was able to sell for seed at a good price, to go into districts where no dry seed wheat could be found.

My old vicar was somewhat scandalized at this Sunday work, and some of my neighbours fancied themselves shocked, but a day or two later I happened to meet another clergyman friend, who farmed a little himself. "I was *so* pleased," he said, "to hear that you were carrying wheat last Sunday; when I was preaching I was strongly disposed to conclude by telling my people—'Now you have been to church, go home to your dinners, and then off with your jackets and carry wheat for the rest of the day.'" Next Sunday all my neighbours were busy with their wheat, but I had managed to complete my harvest during the previous week, on the 8th of October, quite a month or six weeks later than usual, and an extraordinary contrast to the very dry year 1868, when all the corn on the farm, I was told, was carried before the last day of July.

I attended a neighbour's sale that autumn; the wet seasons and the low prices had been too much for him, and he was leaving for the United States; his rick-yard was empty, all the corn sold, and nothing but straw left. I heard him remark, "Folks are saying that I'm very backward with my payments, but I'm very forward with my thrashing, anyway!" Before the following spring nearly all the rick-yards were empty, and wheat-ricks, it was said, were as scarce as churches—one in each parish. The situation was summed up later in a phrase which passed into a proverb: "In 1879 farmers lived on faith, in 1880 they are living on hope, and in 1881 they will have to live on charity."

The attitude of the towns was one of apathy and indifference, like that of the General in *Bracebridge Hall*, which, published in 1822, proves how history repeats itself in agricultural as in other matters:

"He is amazingly well-contented with the present state of things, and apt to get a little impatient at any talk about national ruin and agricultural distress. 'They talk of public distress,' said the General this day to me at dinner, as he smacked a glass of rich burgundy and cast his eyes about the ample board: 'They talk of public distress, but where do we find it, sir? I see none; I see no reason anyone has to complain. Take my word for it, sir, this talk about public distress is all humbug!'"

At Evesham, long before the depression grew into a debacle, the shadows of coming events could easily be detected. There was the disappearance of the long rows of farmers' conveyances at the inns in the town on market-days; there was the eclipse of shops—for other than necessities—such as a little fish shop, opposite the corner at the cross roads; a corner where much business was formerly transacted in the open street, and where I myself have sold by sample some thousands of sacks of wheat. A tempting little shop it used to be, displaying shining Severn salmon; and it was here that the farmers, after the market, obtained the supplies commanded by the missus at home.

And there was the abandonment of the Corn Market proper, for the class of farmers who survived hated to transact their business indoors. The attendance of millers and dealers, except of those who had cargoes of foreign corn at Gloucester or Bristol to dispose of, became irregular. Sales of farm stock and implements took place in every village on farms which had passed from father to son for generations, coupled with the sacrifice of valuable implements and machinery for want of buyers. There followed the stage when landowners who could find no tenants, and had heavily mortgaged estates, essayed to make the best of them by laying away the arable land to pasture, undertaking the management themselves with, perhaps, an old broken-down tenant as bailiff. The politicians and the general public did not apprehend the danger of the situation, in spite of innumerable warnings, until the German submarines were sending our foreign food supplies to the bottom of the sea; and now that the immediate danger of starvation has passed, they appear already to have lapsed again into an attitude of apathy.

We hear the blessed word "reconstruction" on every side, but the only official propositions for the permanent establishment of agricultural prosperity that I have heard are utterly inadequate. It is ridiculous to suppose that a few thousand acres of special crops, like tobacco, for instance, only possible in favoured spots, can in any way compensate for the loss of millions of acres of arable land under rotations of corn and green crops. Under present conditions nothing is more certain than the abandonment of arable land as such; and it is folly to talk of novel systems of transport for a dwindling output, or of building labourers' cottages at an unjustifiable cost, which are never likely to be wanted by a dying industry.

Among my experiences of abnormal weather, I have a note of a remarkable summer flood on July 21, 1875, when my hay was lying in the meadows beside the brooks, and had to be removed to higher ground in pouring rain to prevent its disappearance with the current. On the following day, July 22, the highest flood since 1845 occurred at Evesham.

October 14, 1877, was memorable for the most terrific south-west gale that happened in all the years I passed at Aldington; thirteen trees, mostly old apple trees and elms, were blown down, including the splendid veteran "Chate boy" pear tree at Blackminster, an exceedingly sad and irreparable loss. The gale blew hardest in special tracks, the course of which could be followed by the destruction of trees and branches in distinct lanes, cut through woods and plantations.

The winter of 1880–1881 was very severe, the mean temperature of January, 1881, being 27·8 degrees F., the coldest January since 1820. Ten years later, 1890–1891, another very prolonged winter occurred: the frost began on the 6th of December, and, with scarcely a break, continued till well into February. The feature of this frost was the fine settled weather, and the warmth of the midday sun in the brilliant air, when skaters could sit on the river banks and enjoy their rest and lunch in its rays. I took my elder daughter back to school at Richmond at the end of January, and in London we saw the Thames choked by huge hummocks of ice, on which people were crossing the river. An ox was roasted whole on the Avon at Evesham, and, when the frost broke up, the ice on our millpond was 17 inches thick.

Another great frost happened in 1894–1895, beginning late in December, and lasting till the end of February, with a single intervening week of thaw; and in March the ground, in places, was too hard to plough. It was the only time that I was completely at a loss to find work for my men; all the carting was finished in the early days of the frost, and all the thrashing possible followed;

ploughing and all working of the land, or draining, were impracticable. The men, seeing that there would be no employment for them until the frost broke up, told me that if they might get what wood they could from fallen trees in the brook, and if I would lend them horses and carts to get it home, they would be glad to work in that way for themselves for a time. Just as they had cleared both brooks from end to end of the farm which occupied them about ten days, the thaw came and I was able to find them plenty to do.

We suffered very little from droughts at Aldington, the land was naturally so retentive of moisture, but 1893 was a dry year, not easily forgotten; no rain fell from early in March to July 13; the hay crop was the lightest in remembrance, and straw was so short and scarce that the hay-ricks of the following year, 1894, had to go unthatched until the harvest of that year provided the necessary straw.

The spring of 1895 was remarkable for a plague of the caterpillars of the winter-moth, due to the destruction of insect-eating birds by the great frost; the caterpillars devoured the young leaves of the plum-trees, so that whole orchards were completely stripped. The balance between insectivorous birds and caterpillar life was destroyed for a time, and the caterpillars conquered the plum-trees. In 1917, during the persistent north-east blasts of February, March, and part of April, the destruction of birds was terrible; all the tit tribe suffered greatly, and the charming little golden-crested wren, which here in the Forest was quite common, has scarcely been seen since. Caterpillars again were a plague in my apple trees that spring, but were not really destructive, and in the autumn the apples escaped their usual punishment from the birds and wasps. Tits are often very troublesome; they peck holes in the fruit, apparently in search of the larvæ of the codlin moth, leaving an opening for wasps and flies. I find the berries of the laurel, which is a species of cherry, very attractive to blackbirds, and as long as there are any left they seem to prefer them to the apples. In 1895 cuckoos came to the rescue of my young plum orchard; there were dozens of them at work on the nine acres at once, and they must have cleared away an immense number of the grubs.

The most remarkable season we have had since I left Aldington was the great drought of 1911. There was no rain here worth mention from June 22, the Coronation of King George V., until August 30, and the pastures on this thin land were burnt up. On August 30 we had some friends for tennis, and we had not been playing long before a mighty cloud-burst occurred; the rain fell in torrents. "It didn't stop to rain, it tumbled down," as my men used to say, and in about half an hour the lawn was a sheet of water, the ground being so hard, that it could not soak away. It was all over in an hour, and a neighbour with a rain-gauge registered 0·66 of an inch of rain, equal to 66 tons on an acre, or 330 tons on my five acres.

One of my ambitions has always been to see a Will-o'-the-wisp, and I am still hoping; but that hot summer, had I known it at the time, they were quite common within an easy walk of my house in the New Forest. There was some correspondence on the subject in *The Observer*, and the following is extracted from one of the letters:

"As none of your correspondents seem to be aware of a comparatively recent instance, I write to say that there were enough indubitable Will-o'-the-wisps to convince the most incredulous during the extremely hot weather of July, 1911.

"From July 18 to 22 I was at Thorney Hill in the New Forest, some seven miles behind Christchurch. Owing to the abnormal drought the bogs and bog-streams at the foot of the hill westward were all but dry; a dense mist, however, sometimes rose from them at night. On July 19, and the three following nights, the Will-o'-the-wisps were in great form over the bog. They were like small balls of bluish fire, which projected themselves with hops and jerks across the most inaccessible parts of the bog, starting always, so far as could be told, from where a little stagnant moisture still remained. They moved with an erratic velocity, so to speak, appearing and reappearing at distances of several hundred yards. There wasn't the slightest doubt of their authenticity.

"The inhabitants of Thorney Hill, I believe, regarded these appearances with alarm, as being, though not exactly novelties, harbingers of much misfortune. But the drought was quite bad enough, without having the Jack-o'-lanterns to accentuate it!"

This instance was the more remarkable as I have never succeeded in finding anyone, even among people who are constantly on duty in the Forest, who could testify to having seen a Will-o'-the-wisp.

Waterspouts are, I believe, more frequently seen at sea than on land, but I have an account from my brother, Mr. F. E. Savory, of one he saw many years ago in Wiltshire. He writes:

"When I was at Manningford Bruce in 1873 or 1874, I saw a dense black cloud travelling towards the south-east, the lower part of which became pointed like a funnel in shape, waving about as it descended until, I suppose, the attraction of the earth overcame the cohesion of the cloud's vapour, and it discharged itself. I could see it looking lighter and lighter, from the middle outwards, until it was entirely dispersed. I heard that the water fell on the side of the Down near Collingbourne, about five miles off, and washed some of the soil away, but I did not see that. The weather was stormy, but I do not remember the time of year or any other particulars."

It would seem that a waterspout is caused by a whirlwind entering a cloud and gathering vapour together by its rotary action into such a heavy mass that it descends in the funnel shape described. We are all familiar with the small whirlwinds that travel across a road in summer, carrying the dust round and round with them; these are called "whirly-curlies" in Worcestershire, and are regarded as a sign of fine weather. I have sometimes seen quite a strong one crossing rows of hay just ready to carry, cutting a clean track through each row, and leaving the ground bare where it passed. The hay is often carried to a great height, and sometimes dropped in an adjoining field.

On a bright morning in summer one often sees, a little distance away, a tremulous or flickering movement in the air, not far from the ground, which Tennyson refers to in *In Memoriam*, as, "The landscape winking thro' the heat"; and again in *The Princess:*

> "All the rich to come
> Reels, as the golden Autumn woodland reels
> Athwart the smoke of burning weeds."

I am told that this appearance is "due to layers of air of different degrees of refracting power, in motion, relative to one another. Air at different temperatures will refract light differently." In Hampshire this phenomenon is known by the pretty name of "the summer dance."

Since I came to the Forest I have seen two very curious and, I think, unusual natural appearances. As I was cycling one rather dull afternoon from Wimborne to Ringwood, I noticed a colourless rainbow, or perhaps I should say, "mist-bow," for there was no rain, and the sun was partially obscured. The sun was about south-west, and the bow was north-east; it was merely a series of well-defined but colourless segments of circles, close to each other but shaded so as to make them distinguishable, arranged exactly like a rainbow but without a trace of colour beyond a grey uniformity. It was on my left for several miles, perhaps half of the total distance of nine miles between the two towns.

Cycling another day between Lyndhurst and Burley, I reached the east entrance of Burley Lodge, which is on higher ground than the farm spread out to the right in the valley. The whole valley was filled with thick white mist, as level as a lake, so that nothing could be seen of the fields. The setting sun was low down at the further extremity of the valley, and the surface of the mist-lake reflected its rays in a rosy sheen, with a track of brighter light in the middle, stretching from the far end of the lake in a broad path almost to where I was standing; just as we see the track of sunlight or moonlight, sometimes, on the sea, from the shore. This phenomenon is not uncommon when one is looking down from the top of a hill in the sunshine, upon a valley full of mist, but I have never seen it before from comparatively low ground, as on this occasion.

My summers at Aldington were nearly always too busy to allow me to take a holiday, except for a very few days, but when the urgent work of the year was over, the harvest completed, and the hops and the fruit picked, we always had a clear month away from home, about the middle of October to the middle of November; and, as we found the autumn much less advanced in the south than in the midlands, we often spent the time on the south coast or in the Isle of Wight, and we were nearly always favoured by fine weather. On one of these occasions, when we were exploring the whole island on bicycles, I never once found it necessary to carry a waterproof cape, though in the course of this visit we rode over 600 miles.

NOTE.

The Changing Course of Streams.

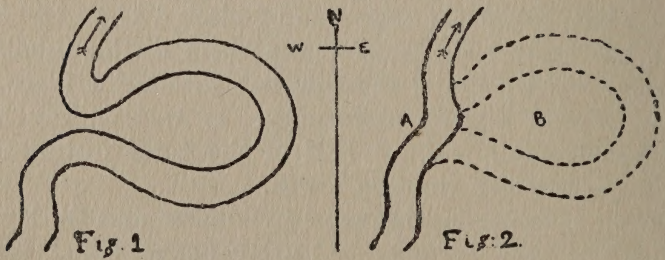

Fig. 1 shows the flattened *S* formed by the stream.

Fig. 2 shows the short circuit formed later at *A* and the island *B* When the old bed of the stream round *B* gets filled up, the island *B* disappears, and its area and that part of the old bed formerly on the west side of the stream is transferred to the east side.

CHAPTER XXI

BIRDS: PEACOCKS—A WHITE PHEASANT—ROOKS' ARITHMETIC

> "Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
> Bird thou never wert,
> That from heaven or near it,
> Pourest thy full heart."
>
> SHELLEY: *To a Skylark.*

WE read of the peacocks which Solomon's navy of Tarshish brought once in three years with other rare and precious commodities to contribute to the splendour of his court; and doubtless their magnificence added a distinct feature even where so much that was beautiful was to be seen; but, to show itself off to the best advantage, one cannot imagine a better place for a peacock than a grey old English home, round whose mellow stone walls time is lingering lovingly. The touch of brilliant life beside the appeal of the venerable past adds perfection to the picture. I have always had an immense admiration for peacocks, and soon after I came to Aldington I bought a pair. The cock we named Gabriel Junks, after the famous bird in one of Scrutator's books; he was a grand presence, and loved to display the huge fan of his gorgeously-eyed tail, quivering his rattling quills in all the glory of its greens and blues, and cinnamon-coloured wing feathers, on the little piece of lawn under the chestnut trees in front of the Manor.

He learned to come to the window every morning at breakfast-time for a piece of bread-and-butter, and if the window was closed he would rap impatiently upon it with his beak. He roosted in the orchard just across the road on the trunk of an ancient leaning apple-tree. One night Bell heard a terrible fluttering, and looking out saw a fox making off with the peacock; he shouted and the fox dropped the peacock and bolted. Gabriel was not hurt, but sadly ruffled inwardly and outwardly, though, next day, he was quite happy and apparently unconscious of his narrow escape. But alas! some months later Reynard paid another visit, and poor Gabriel was never seen again. Some years after we bought another pair, not nearly so tame as the first, and sometimes flying on to the cottage roofs and scraping holes in the thatch in which to bask in the sun. The villagers complained that the birds sat under their black currant bushes, and devoured the currants as fast as they ripened! We could not keep them within bounds, and later sold them to St. John's College, Oxford, where we saw them soon afterwards in good plumage, and exactly in keeping with their beautiful surroundings.

One of my neighbours appeared to find these birds a special infliction, and complained of the invasion of his premises by "them paycocks." The word "pea" is always rendered "pay" in Worcestershire, and, like "tay" for "tea," is probably the old correct pronunciation. I lately saw a notice on some tumble-down premises near Southampton, "Pay and bane stiks for sale." Another notice, not too happily composed, is to be seen at a Forest village; after the owner's name, "Carpenter, builder and undertaker—*repairs neatly executed.*"

The neighbour referred to was exercised in his mind as to my position in various unwelcome parochial offices, but I was completely mystified when he told me that he had read in history of a King Alfred, but had never heard of a King Arthur. I did not grasp the force of his remark, possibly because King Arthur was a familiar character to me, until I was nearly at my own door, when it dawned upon me to my intense enjoyment. If the reader fails, like me, to see the point, let him turn to the title-page of this book, and read the name of the writer.

The only real objection to peacocks, under ordinary conditions, is the discordance of their cries, especially in thundery weather, when they scream in answer to every thunder-clap. Cock pheasants, relatives of the peacock, crow loudly at any unusual noise; and I have known them expostulate at the report of a gun; they took flight, after running to a safe distance, and their crow appeared to be in the nature of a challenge or defiance, just as a barn-door cock will exult if you give him the idea that he has driven you away.

When the vessel which carried the coffin of Queen Victoria was crossing the Solent, in 1901, some very heavy salutes were fired from the battleships, and, the day being still and the air clear, the detonations carried to an immense distance. They were distinctly heard at Moreton-in-the-Marsh, only fourteen miles from Aldington and a distance of nearly one hundred miles from the guns, in a direct line. The reports were so loud at Woodstock, near Oxford, that the pheasants began crowing in the Blenheim preserves.

At Alton there were some extensive woods and coppices on the farm, which were favourite breeding-places for pheasants, being dry and sunny. Some months before October 1, when pheasant shooting begins, a white pheasant was seen, and although he disappeared for a time, he fell eventually to the gun of the tenant. He was a beautiful bird, and was considered worth stuffing as a rarity. Albinism is not uncommon in the blackbird; I have seen two partial instances lately; one was constantly visible in my garden and meadows, with head nearly all white, and the other I saw in the public garden at Bournemouth, with the peculiarity still more developed. A white martin, or swallow, came into the house of a friend near Aldington, and was regarded as an unfavourable omen. Melanism, the opposite of albinism, is rarer, and the only instance I have seen was that of a black bullfinch at Aldington; it had evidently been mobbed as a stranger by other birds of its kind, as it was injured and nearly dead when captured. I had the specimen stuffed as a curiosity, though I am not fond of stuffed birds. It is said that hemp-seed, if given in undue quantities to cage bullfinches, will produce the black colour, even upon a bird of quite natural plumage originally, and a case of the kind is mentioned by Gilbert White.

Aldington, with its quiet apple orchards and the "island" and shrubberies below my garden, was a happy refuge for birds of all kinds, and the old pollard-willow heads a favourite nesting-place. Worcestershire people have some very curious names for birds, and some of these are also heard in Hampshire and Dorset. The green woodpecker is the "stock-eagle," "ekal," or "hickle," both in Worcestershire and Hampshire, and the word survives too in "Hickle Brook" in the Forest, and in "Hickle Street," a part of Buckle Street in Worcestershire. As a boy I once marked a green woodpecker into one of the round holes we see quite newly cut by the bird in an oak; getting a butterfly net I clapped it over the hole, caught the bird, took it home and placed it in a wicker cage. Then, returning to the tree with a chisel and mallet, I cut a hole about a foot below the entrance to the nest, only to find young birds instead of the eggs for which I had hoped. I went home to see how my captive was getting on; she was gone, and her method of escape was plain, one or two of the wicker bars being neatly cut through. I had forgotten the power of "stocking" of a "stock-eagle," for that is the meaning of the prefix in the name.

The laughing cry of the green woodpecker, or "yaffle," as the bird is by onomatopœia called in some parts, is regarded as a sign of rain. I doubt whether it should be always so interpreted, for I know it is sometimes a sign of distress or call for help, having heard it from one in full flight from a pursuing hawk. Other curious local names of birds in Worcestershire are "Blue Isaac" for hedge sparrow, "mumruffin" for long-tailed tit, "maggot" for magpie, and the heron is always called "bittern" (really quite a distinct bird). There are innumerable rhymes as to the signification of numbers where magpies are concerned, but the most complete I have heard runs thus:

> "One's joy, two's grief,
> Three's marriage, four's death,
> Five's heaven, six is hell,
> Seven's the devil his own sel'."

Other rhymes make "one" an unlucky number, and there are many people in Worcestershire who never see a solitary magpie without touching their hats to avert the omen, and convert it to one of good-luck; as a man once said to me, "It is as well not to lose a chance."

The kingfisher, I suppose the most beautiful of British birds, was, with all my brooks, a common bird at Aldington. Its steady flight, following the course of a stream, and its brilliant colouring make it very conspicuous, its turquoise blue varying to dark green, and its orange breast flashing in the sun. I found a nest in a water-rat's old hole, with six very transparent white eggs, deriving a rosy tint from the yolk, almost visible, within the shell. The hole had an entrance above the bank, descended vertically, turned at a right angle where the nest, merely a layer of small fish-bones, was placed, and ended horizontally on the side of the bank. I once saw six young kingfishers sitting side by side on a dead branch, close together, evidently just out of the nest. And I was fortunate in seeing a kingfisher dart upon the water, hover for an instant like a hawk-moth over honeysuckle, and, having caught a small gudgeon, fly away with it in its beak. They, like the martin, always perch on leafless wood, so that the leaves shall not impede their flight when pouncing upon a fish, and no doubt this is the reason they sometimes perch on the top joint of the rod of a hidden fisherman.

The nuthatch, called here the "mud-dauber," from its habit of narrowing the hole of a starling's old nest, with mud, for its own use as a nesting-place, is a more common bird in the Forest than in Worcestershire. It is a provident bird, firmly wedging hazel nuts in the autumn into crevices of the Scots-fir, for a winter store. Bewick mentions that it uses these crevices as vices, to hold the nut securely, while it cracks it; but he does not recognize the fact that they have been stored long previously. I have seen a great number of nuts so stored and quite sound.

Bewick, by the way, who wrote his *History of British Birds* in 1797, presents in one of his inimitable "tail-piece" wood-cuts a prevision of the aeroplane. The picture shows the airman seated in a winged car, guiding with reins thirteen harnessed herons as the motive power, and mounting upwards, apparently very near the moon. If he can see the modern interpretation of his dream he must be pleasantly surprised. Bewick's woodcock is one of the most beautiful portraits in the book: the accurate detail of the feather markings of the wings and back and the softer tone of the breast are as nearly perfection as possible. A woodcock visited Aldington in one of the very severe winters but managed to elude all pursuers. It has been said, and also contradicted, that the woodcock when rising from the ground uses its long bill as a lever to assist its starting, just as an oarsman pushes off from the bank with a boat-hook or oar; I myself have seen one rising from a bare and marshy place, and the position of its bill certainly gave me the impression that the idea was well founded.

The woodcock often breeds in the south of England, but is usually a migrating bird, arriving during the first moon in November; it is not difficult to shoot when it first rises, but when steam is really up and it is zig-zagging between the branches of an oak, it takes a good shot to make sure of it. I shall never forget the first woodcock I shot as a boy; it was a thick misty day in November, I fired, and though I felt certain I had not missed, the smoke hung and the air was too thick to see, and, after a long search, I left the wood and was going home when our old spaniel, Flush, turned his head to examine something in a deep cart rut. Following the direction of his eyes, I saw my woodcock; it must have flown 100 yards or more after I fired. I was still more pleased with the last shot I fired in our old Surrey covers at a woodcock going like an express train—and faster, for they are said to fly at the rate of 150 miles an hour—with all his tricks, through thick branches in the adjoining cover, where he fell at least 65 yards from where I stood. A friend of mine had the good-fortune to see an old woodcock, which had evidently bred in his woods, flying, followed by five or six young ones; he said it was one of the prettiest bits of natural history he had ever seen.

> "If a woodcock had a partridge's breast
> He'd be the best bird that ever was dressed;
> If a partridge had a woodcock's thigh
> He'd be the best bird that ever did fly."

is a very old description, and fairly divides the honours between the two birds.

The hawfinch is very easily recognized by its distinct and beautiful colouring; it is a shy bird, and though it bred regularly at Aldington, we rarely saw it. It is commoner here, and is sometimes very destructive, its powerful beak making havoc with the "marrowfats"; but, though I am partial to green peas of this description, I would sooner suffer some damage than have the hawfinches shot.

In 1918 the cuckoos were exceedingly numerous here, and round my house they were calling all day long. Owing to the terrible winter and early spring months of the previous year, so many of the insectivorous birds had been destroyed, that the caterpillars had escaped, and were more numerous than ever in the following spring. The oaks in places were completely stripped of their foliage by the larvæ of *Tortrix viridana*, almost as soon as the leaves were out. The cuckoos discovered them, but were not in sufficient numbers to keep them down, and it was midsummer before the trees recovered. I have referred to the damage in my plum orchard at Aldington from the attack of the larvæ of the winter-moth; the damage is not confined to the actual year of its occurrence, the crop suffers the following year owing to the previous defoliation of the tree, which is weakened and is unable to mature healthy fruit buds. At Aldington, in a hot summer, the cuckoos used to call nearly all night, and I have heard them when it was quite dark.

For some years, until 1918, goldfinches were quite common in Hampshire and Dorsetshire. I have seen a flock of over forty together. I had seven nests on my premises here one summer; they go on breeding very late, and I have found their nests with young birds half-fledged while summer-pruning apple trees in August. They come into my garden close to the windows in May, after the ripening seeds of the myosotis (forget-me-not) in the spring-bedding. I never remember seeing a goldfinch at Aldington, which should show that the thistles were well under control, for the seed is a great attraction. One often hears the practice of allowing thistles to run to seed condemned as criminal, for everybody knows that each thistle-down, carried by the wind, contains a seed, and that the attachment of a light structure of plumes is one of Nature's methods of ensuring dissemination. But, in Worcestershire, it is always asserted that thistle seed will not germinate—I am referring to *Cnicus arvensis*—and it is said that a prize of £50 offered for a seedling thistle remains unclaimed to this day. I failed, myself, in trying to obtain young plants from seeds sown in a flower-pot, and I have never seen a seedling in all the thousands of miles I must have walked over young cornfields when my men were hoeing.

I have heard an interesting story about rooks which were causing a farmer much damage in a field newly sown with peas. He erected a small shelter of hurdles, from which to shoot them, and for a time the shelter was sufficient to scare them, until they got used to it; but, when he entered it with his gun, they would not come near. Thinking to deceive their sentinel, watching from a tree, he took a companion to the shelter, who remained for a time and then left, but still no rooks came near. The farmer then took two companions, and presently sent them both away. The arithmetic was too much for the rooks, and the scheme succeeded. He concluded that their powers of enumeration were limited to counting "two," and that "three" was beyond them.

Nightingales are scarce in the Forest; they do not like the solitude of the great woods, apparently preferring to inhabit roadsides and places where people and traffic are constantly passing. They are specially abundant at the foot of the Cotswolds, and it is a treat to cycle steadily along the road between Broadway and Weston Subedge on a summer evening, where you no sooner lose the liquid notes of one, than you enter the territory of another, so continuous is the song for miles together.

In severe winters wood-pigeons did much damage at Aldington to young clover a few inches high; they roosted in "the island" adjoining my garden. When they first descended they alighted in the wide-spreading branches of the leafless black poplars, where they could see all round, and reconnoitre the position; then, if all was quiet, in about ten minutes they took to the shelter of the fir trees for the night with much fluttering and beating of wings against the thick branches. They devour the acorns in the Forest very greedily in the autumn, and I have seen one with crop so full that on my approach it could only with difficulty fly away to a short distance. I found it near a small pond where, apparently, it had been drinking, and the acorns had expanded to an inconvenient extent.

The golden-crested wren was a common bird here before the severe winter of 1916–1917, but it has since become comparatively rare; it is the smallest of British birds, and could often be seen in the hedges exploring every twig and crevice for insects, and it was a great pleasure to watch the nimble movements of such a sweet little fairy. Its first cousin, the fire-crest, which is almost its exact counterpart, except for the flame-coloured crest, is much rarer; and I only remember seeing one specimen, to which with great circumspection I managed to approach quite closely, in the wood near my house.

One morning, at Aldington, the gardener came in to say there was a hawk in the greenhouse near the rickyard; we found a pane of glass broken, where it had unintentionally entered in pursuit of a sparrow; the hawk was uninjured, and flew away quite unconcernedly on the opening of the door. Another hawk, here in Burley, was found dead near my drawing-room bow-window. It had dashed itself against a pane of thick plate-glass while in pursuit of a starling, I think; seeing the light through the bow, it had not recognized the glass, and must have collided with it in the act of swooping. I have several times seen hawks descend like a flash from a tree, and select an unlucky starling from a flock; one blow on the head settled the victim before I could reach the spot, but sometimes the hawk had to leave its prize behind it.

I was watching a number of young chicks feeding outside the coops containing the mother hens, when there suddenly arose a great disturbance, and a hawk, which had pounced upon a chick, was seen flying away with it in its talons. Its flight was impeded by the weight of the chicken, and we gave chase shouting. Flying very low it carried its prey to the further side of the meadow, but, seeing that it could not get quickly through the trees there, it dropped the chicken and escaped; we picked up the poor frightened infant, which was not injured, and restored it to a perturbed but joyful mother. "As yaller as a kite's claw," is a simile one hears in the country, and it is common to both Hampshire and Worcestershire.

I never saw the wheatear in Worcestershire, but here I notice several pairs on the moors in summer. They were once very plentiful on the Sussex Downs and seaside cliffs, and as a boy walking from my first school at Rottingdean to visit my people at Brighton, from Saturday to Sunday night, I have passed hundreds of traps consisting of rectangular holes cut in the turf, having horsehair nooses inside, set by the shepherds who took thousands of wheatears to the poulterers' shops in the town. They were then considered a great delicacy. Other professional bird-catchers operated with large clap-nets, and a string attached in the hands of the catcher some distance away. When they were after larks a revolving mirror, flashing in the sun, was considered very attractive; I suppose the birds approached from motives of curiosity.[1] Many thousands were caught for the London and Brighton markets for lark pies and puddings, a wicked bathos, when we remember Wordsworth's lines:

> "There is madness about thee, and joy divine
> In that song of thine."

One severe winter an immense flock of golden plovers haunted my land and neighbouring farms for some weeks, but they were exceedingly shy, and being perfect strangers, they were difficult to identify, until I brought one down by a very long shot, and we could see what a beautiful bird it was. We could always tell when really severe winter weather was coming, by the flocks of wild geese that passed overhead in V-shaped formation. They were said to be leaving the mouth of the Humber and the East Coast for the warmer shores of the Bristol Channel, evidently quite aware that the latter, within the influence of the Gulf Stream, were more desirable as winter-quarters. Evesham is in the direct line between the two places, and we often heard them calling at night as they passed. In the early spring when the severe weather was over they returned by the same route.

[1] Mr. H. A. Evans sends me a very interesting note on this subject. He refers me to Shakespeare, *Henry VIII.*, III., ii., 282, where Surrey, alluding to Wolsey, says:

> "If we live thus tamely,
> To be thus jaded by a piece of scarlet,
> Farewell nobility; let his grace go forward,
> And dare us with his cap like larks."

The verb *dare* here used is quite a distinct word from *dare* = to venture to do. It means to daze or render helpless with the sight of something. To dare larks is to fascinate or daze them in order to catch them. The "dare" is made of small bits of looking-glass fastened on scarlet cloth. Shakespeare's use of the word in the passage quoted is evidently an allusion to the scarlet biretta of the cardinal. In Hogarth's "Distressed Poet" a "dare" is suspended above the chimney-piece.

CHAPTER XXII

PETS: SUSIE—COCKY—TRUMP—CHIPS—WENDY—TAFFY

> "The heart is hard in nature and unfit
> For human fellowship, as being void
> Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
> To love and friendship both, that is not pleased
> With sight of animals enjoying life,
> Nor feels their happiness augment his own."
> COWPER.

THERE are many stories of the affection of the domestic goose for man, and I knew of one which was very fond of a friend of mine. The goose followed him like a dog, and would come with him on to the lawn where we were playing tennis, and sitting close beside him on a garden seat with great dignity would apparently watch the game with interest. My friend was fond of unusual pets; he had a tame hedgehog, for whom he made a most comfortable house with living-room downstairs and sleeping apartment on the first floor. His pet's name was Jacob, suggested I think by the ladder which night and morning he used for ascending to or descending from his bedroom. Hedgehogs have a bad character as robbers of partridges' nests, and in our old parish accounts, under the name of "urchins," we find entries of payments for their destruction at the rate of 4d. apiece.

My younger daughter had a tame duck, Susie by name, who gravely waddled behind her round the garden. In summer at tea-time Susie would much enjoy the company under the wych-elm on the lawn, and took her "dish of tea" out of the saucer in the antique and orthodox manner. Another amusing pet was a jackdaw who had an outdoor residence, though often allowed to be loose. He acquired an exact imitation of my old gardener's chronic cough, and enjoyed the exhibition of his achievement when the old man was working near the cage, somewhat to the man's annoyance. He was full of mischief, and was not allowed in the house; but he once got in at my study window, picked out every sheet of notepaper from my stationery case, and scattered them in all directions.

A still more accomplished mimic, a lemon-crested cockatoo, reproduced the voices of little hungry pigs. He lived indoors on a stand over a tray, with a chain round one leg, and was very clever at mounting and descending by the combined use of beak and claws, without complicating himself with his chain. He got loose one day, and ascended one of the chestnut trees, and a volunteer went up after him by a ladder. Cocky resented his interference, flew at him and bit his finger to the bone. His beak was a very powerful weapon, and, until I made him a new tray with a zinc-covered ledge, he demolished any unprotected wood or even furniture within reach.

This spring we had a blackbird's nest in some ivy near the house, and many times each day the cock bird came to watch over his household, and discourse sweet music from a neighbouring tree. A pair of jays however appeared, and seemed too much interested in the nest for the parents' comfort, approaching so near one morning that first the cock blackbird, and then the hen attacked them; and though they returned again during the day, evidently bent on mischief, the courageous parents eventually drove them from the field, and they were seen no more. Owing to the cutting of great fir woods in the Forest for timber supplies for the war, jays have become much more common here than formerly, and seem to have migrated from their former haunts and taken to the beeches and oaks in the undisturbed woods.

Birds as a rule are not well represented in books, though the drawing is more correct than the colouring. Examine Randolph Caldecott's *Sing a Song for Sixpence* for a really clever sketch of the four and twenty blackbirds, every one a characteristic likeness, and a different attitude;

and look at his rookery in *Bracebridge Hall*, where, in three sketches he shows some equally exact rooks.

I always walked when on my farming rounds, for one of the first lessons I learned at Alton was that for that purpose "one walk is better than three rides." My predecessor being a hunting man and fond of horses, generally rode, but for careful observation, especially in the matter of plant diseases, one wants to "potter about" with a magnifying glass sometimes, and of course in entomology and ornithology there is no room for a horse. One of the remarks made by my men about me on my arrival was, "His mother larned him to walk," with quite a note of admiration to emphasize it. It is really remarkable how farmers and country people scorn the idea of walking either for pleasure or business, if "a lift" can be had. I was at Cheltenham with a brother, and finding we had done our business in good time, we decided to walk to the next station—Cleeve—instead of waiting for the train at Cheltenham. We asked a native the way, who replied with great contempt, "Cleeve station? Oh, I wouldn't walk to Cleeve to save tuppence!"

One of our ventures in the way of pets was a well-bred poodle; he was very amiable, handsome, and clever, but exceedingly mischievous. He thought it great fun to pull up neatly written and carefully disposed garden labels and carry them away to the lawn, for which, though a nuisance, he was forgiven; but his next achievement was a more serious matter. Finding his way about the village he would take advantage of an open door to explore the cottage larders and when a chance offered, would make off with half a pound of butter or a cherished piece of meat and bring his plunder to my house in triumph. He was succeeded by "Trump," a Dandie Dinmont, a very charming dog with a delightful disposition, and perfectly honest until my elder daughter acquired a fox terrier, "Chips," well-bred but highly nervous. Chips was a born sportsman and most useful so long as he confined his activities to rats and was busy when the thrashing-machine was at work, but when he took to corrupting Trump's morals he required watching. Trump would be lying quietly in the house or garden as good as possible, when the insinuating tempter would find him, whisper a few words in his ear, and off they went together. It was plainly an invitation, and later a dead duckling or chicken would show where they had spent their time. Trump became as bad as Chips and had to be given away. Chips was very sensitive to discordant sounds, he must have had a musical ear; his chief aversion was the sound of a gong, the beater for which was too hard and, unless very carefully manipulated, produced a jangle. My hall was paved with hexagonal stone sections called "quarries," which appeared to intensify the discordance. Chips felt it keenly, and would stand quite rigid for some minutes until the last reverberation and its effect had passed off. He was uncertain in temper and disliked some of the villagers. An old man complained that he had been bitten, and told me with great feeling, "Folks say that if ever the dog goes mad, I shall go mad too." I had much difficulty in appeasing him and assuring him that there was no truth in the statement.

How shall I do justice to the infinite variety of "Wendy," the dainty little Chinese princess who now rules my household? There are people who cannot see in an old Worcester tea-cup and saucer the eighteenth-century beauty, fastidiously sipping, what she called in the same language as the Aldington cottager of to-day, her dish of "tay." There are people who regard with indifference an ancient chair, except as an object to be sat upon, and who fail to realize its historical charm, or even the credit due to the maker of a piece of furniture that has survived two hundred and fifty spring cleanings.

And there are people who can see nothing in the Pekingese, nothing of the distinction and "the claims of long descent," nothing of the possibilities of transmigration, or of present ever-changing and human moods. Such are the people who suppose that the "dulness of the country," and the attraction of the shams and inanities of the picture palace induced the starving agricultural labourer willingly to exchange the blue vault of heaven for the leaden pall of London fogs, cool green pastures for the scorching pavement, and the fragrant shelter of the hedgerow blossoms for the stifling slum and the crowded factory.

There is nothing of the democrat about Wendy; watch her elevate an already tip-tilted nose at displeasing food, or a tainted dish, and notice her look of abject contempt for the giver as she turns away in disgust. No lover of the Pekingese should be without a charming little book *Some Pekingese Pets* by M. N. Daniel, with delightful sketches by the author, in which we are told that, " Until the year 1860, so far as is known, no ' Foreign Devil ' had ever seen one of these Imperial Lion Dogs. In that year, however, the sacking of the Imperial Palace at Pekin took place, and amongst the treasures looted and brought to England were five little Lion or Sun Dogs."

The author also says: " It is certain that the same type of Lion Dog as our Western Pekingese must have existed in China for at least a thousand years: that they were regarded as sacred or semi-sacred is proved by the Idols and Kylons (many of them known to be at least a thousand years old) representing the same type of Lion Dog." I have an old Nankin blue teapot, the lid of which is surmounted by one of these Kylons.

I can only describe Wendy's moods and characteristics by giving a bare catalogue: she is mirthful, hopeful, playful, despairing, bored, defiant, roguish, cunning, penitent, sensitive, aggressive, offended, reproachful, angry, pleased, trustful, loving, disobedient, determined, puzzled, faithful, naughty, dignified, impudent, proud, luxurious, fearless, disappointed, docile, fierce, independent, mischievous; and she often illustrates the rhyme:

" The dog will come when he's called,
And the cat will stay away,
But the Pekingese will do as he please
Whatever you do or say."

Wendy is cat-like in some of her habits, prefers fish to meat, sleeps all day in wet weather but is lively towards night, is very particular about her toilet and washes her face with moistened paws passed over her ears. She is very sensitive to the weather, loves the sun, lying stretched at full length on the hot gravel so that she can enjoy the comforting warmth to her little body. She is wretched in a thunderstorm, shivering and taking refuge beneath a table or sofa; then she comes to me for sympathy, and lies on my knee, covered with a rug or a newspaper, but after a bad storm she is not herself for many hours. Anyone who does not know her may think the moods I have detailed an impossible category, but there is not one which we have not personally witnessed again and again, and no one can see her loving caresses of my wife without being assured of the soul that animates her mind and body.

Wendy is never allowed to "sit in damp clothes," or even with feet wet with rain or dew, and looks very reproachful if not attended to at once with a rough towel on coming indoors. "Why *don't* you dry me ?" is exactly the expression her looks convey. She has a lined basket, on four short legs to keep her from draughts when sleeping, but she is often uneasy alone at night, evidently "seeing things," and, in Worcestershire language, finding it "unked," so she is now always allowed a night-light.

It is said that the dog's habit of turning round several times before settling to sleep is a survival from remote ages when they made themselves a comfortable bed by smoothing down the grass around them, but I am quite sure that Wendy does the same thing to get her coat unruffled, and in the best condition to protect her from draughts. She likes to lie curled up into a circle, so that her hind paws may come under her chin for warmth, and support her head, as her neck is so short that without a pillow of some sort she could not rest in comfort; as an alternative, she will sometimes arrange the rug in her sleeping basket to act in the same way.

We had various cobs and ponies from time to time; quite a good pony could be bought at six months old for about £12, and one of the best we had was Taffy, from a drove of Welsh. Returning from Evesham Station with my man we passed a labourer with something in a hamper on his shoulder that rattled, just as we reached the Aldington turning; Taffy started, swerved across the road in the narrowest part, and jumped through the hedge, taking cart and all; we found ourselves in a wheat-field, but were not overturned, and reached a gate in safety none the worse.

On an old May Day (May 12) I was at Bretforton Manor playing tennis and shooting rooks. About 10.30 p.m. the cart and Taffy were brought round; I had all my things in and was about to mount when, the pony fidgeting to be off, my friend's groom caught at the rein, but he had omitted to buckle it on one side of the bit. In an instant pony and trap had disappeared, and the man was lying in the drive with a broken leg. We had to carry him home on a door, and then went in search of the pony, expecting every moment to find it and the trap in a ditch; about half a mile from Aldington we met my own man who had come in search of my remains. He told us that the pony and trap were quite safe and uninjured. The clever animal had trotted the whole distance, over two miles, with the reins dragging behind him, taken the turning from the highroad, and again at my gate, and pulled up in front of the house, where someone passing saw him and brought my man out to the rescue.

CHAPTER XXIII

BUTTERFLIES—MOTHS—WASPS

> "How like a rainbow, sparkling as a dewdrop,
> Glittering as gold, and lively as a swallow,
> Each left his grave-shroud and in rapture winged him
> Up to the heavens."
>
> ANON.

I HAVE always been fascinated by the beauty of butterflies and moths, and I think I began collecting when I was about eleven, as I remember having a net when I was at school at Rottingdean. My first exciting capture was a small tortoiseshell, and I was much disappointed when I discovered that it was quite a common insect. In 1917 some nettles here were black with the larvæ of this species, but I think they must have been nearly all visited by the ichneumons, which pierce the skin, laying their eggs in the living body of the larva, as the butterflies were not specially common later. I was, however, fortunate in identifying a specimen of the curious variety figured in Newman's *British Butterflies*, variety 2, from one in Mr. Bond's collection; it has a dark band crossing the middle of the upper wings, but, though interesting, it is not so handsome as the type. I did not catch this specimen, as I do not like killing butterflies now, but I had ample leisure to observe it quite closely on the haulm of potatoes. It was decidedly smaller than the type.

The old garden at Aldington in the repose of a June evening was a place of fragrant joy from honeysuckle on poles and arches, and just as the light was fading the huge privet hawk-moths, with quivering wings and extended probosces, used to sip the honey from the long blossoms. I could catch them in a net, but these specimens were nearly all damaged from their energetic flight among the flowers, and perfect ones are easy to rear from the larvæ, feeding in autumn on privet in the hedges.

Later in the summer the Ghost Swift appeared about twilight, the white colour of the male making it very conspicuous. Twilight at Aldington is called "owl light," and moths of all kinds are "bob-owlets," from their uneven flight when trying to evade the owls in pursuit. We often see these birds "hawking" at nightfall in my meadows round the edge of the Forest after moths.

The martagon lily flourished in the Aldington garden, and when they were blooming the overpowering scent was particularly attractive to moths of the *Plusia* genus, including the Burnished Brass, the Golden Y, and the Beautiful Golden Y, all exhibiting very distinctive markings of burnished gold; and other *Noctuæ* in great variety. The latter are best taken by "sugaring"—painting patches of mixed beer and sugar on a series of tree trunks, and making several rounds at twilight with a lantern and a cyanide bottle. We had a sugaring range of about seventy pollard withies by the brook side, and being well sheltered, it was such a favourite place for moths, that it was often difficult to select from each patch, swarming with sixty or seventy specimens, those really worth taking. At sugaring moths are found in a locality where they are never seen at other times, and rarities occur quite unexpectedly. I took some specimens of *Cymatophora ocularis* (figure of 80). Newman says: "It is always esteemed a rarity," and mentions Worcester as a locality. *Mamestra abjecta* was quite a common catch, of which Newman writes: "It seems to be very local, and so imperfectly known that the recorded habitats must be received with great doubt; it is certainly abundant on the banks of the Thames, near Gravesend, and also on the Irish coast, near Waterford."

The marks of sugaring remain on tree trunks for many years. I lately saw the faint remains on about sixty trees in Set Thorns plantation, in the Forest, which a friend and

I painted on nearly forty years ago. This friend was fortunate in capturing the black variety of the White Admiral, in which the white markings are entirely absent on the upper side; and, thirty years later, his son took another near Burley. The son also caught a Camberwell Beauty on one of his sugared patches in the day-time. I believe this to be the only recorded instance of the occurrence of this rare and beautiful insect in the Forest.

The Hornet Clearwing (*Sesia Apiformis*) is a very interesting moth, and it was common at Aldington; the larva feeds on the wood of the black poplar. The colouring of the moth so resembles the hornet, that at first sight it is easily mistaken for the latter. It is an excellent example of "mimicry," whereby a harmless insect acquires the distinctive appearance of a harmful one, and so secures immunity from the attacks of its natural enemies.

The larva of the Death's Head was not uncommon at Aldington and Badsey on potatoes; I had a standing offer of threepence each for any that the village children could bring me. These large caterpillars require very careful handling, and I fear the children were not gentle enough with them, as I only had one perfect specimen moth from all the larvæ they brought.

One of my hop-pickers captured and presented me with a very fine specimen of the Convolvulus Hawk-moth at Aldington; they were generally comparatively common that year (1901) and a collector took no less than seventeen in a few days in the public garden at Bournemouth.

The Clouded Yellow butterfly, whose appearance is very capricious, occurred one summer in Worcestershire in considerable numbers; it is strong on the wing and could easily reach the Midlands in fine weather from the south of England, where it is more often seen. Those I saw were flying high over clover fields, apparently in a hurry to get further north-west.

The Marbled White is a somewhat local butterfly; there was a spot along the Terrace on Cleeve Hill, near North Littleton and Cleeve Prior, where, at the proper time, this insect was plentiful, but I never saw it anywhere else in the neighbourhood.

One of the entomological prizes of the New Forest is the Purple Emperor; it is impossible to do justice to the wonderful sheen of its powerful wings. It inhabits the tops of lofty oaks, but does not disdain to come down for a drink of water, sometimes from a muddy pool, or even to feast on dead vermin which the keepers have destroyed.

The Comma, so called from the C-mark on the under side of the hind wings, is fairly plentiful in Worcestershire and Herefordshire in the hop-districts, for the hop is its food plant; but it is curious that, with the abundance of hops in Kent, Sussex, and Hants, it is quite a rare insect in the south of England. The ragged edge of its hind wings is probably an arrangement to baffle birds in pursuit, offering more difficulty to securing a sure hold than is afforded by the even margin of the hind wings of most butterflies.

In some years wasps were exceedingly troublesome at Aldington, and fruit picking became a hazardous business. One of my men ploughed up a nest in an open field, and was badly stung, though the horses, being further from the nest when turned up, escaped. It is quite necessary to destroy any nests on or near land where fruit is grown, as the insects increase in numbers at a surprising rate, and they travel great distances after food for the grubs. I had an instructive walk over the fruit farm of my son-in-law, Mr. C. S. Martin, of Dunnington Heath, near Alcester, with his cousin, Mr. William Martin, who is extraordinarily clever at locating the nests. He quickly recognizes a line of flight in which numbers of wasps can be seen going backwards and forwards, in a well-defined cross-country track, follows it up and locates the nest a long distance from where he first perceived the line. In this way during our walk he found a dozen or more nests. In the evening, when the inmates were at home, they were treated with a strong solution of cyanide of potassium to destroy the winged insects; and the next day the nests were dug out and the grubs destroyed, which otherwise would become perfect wasps.

Lately it has become a custom to pay a half-penny each for all queen wasps in the spring, but Mr. C. S. Martin, who had many years' experience on the fruit plantations of the Toddington Orchard Company, extending to about 700 acres, as well as on his own plantations at Dunnington, writes to me as follows on the subject :

"To catch the queens in the spring is to my mind a waste of time, and I discontinued paying for their capture, as the number visible in the spring appeared to bear no relation to the resulting summer nests. In the first place, the number of queens in spring is always greatly in excess of the numbers of nests, and to attempt to catch all the queens is a hopeless job. As a rule, I don't think one per cent. ever gets as far as a nest unless the weather conditions are very favourable. Heavy rain, when the broods begin, may easily wipe out 99 per cent., and only those on a dry bank will survive. To pay a halfpenny per queen may be equivalent to the payment of four and twopence per nest !"

Referring to the payment of school-children for the destruction of white butterflies he writes:

"The white butterfly is extraordinarily prolific, and to catch a few in the garden is a complete waste of time. Again, weather conditions are largely responsible for the occurrence of a bad attack, and the only possible time to reduce the plague is in the caterpillar stage, with hellebore powder, or one of the proprietary remedies, applied to the young plants. Scientists recommend the catching of queen wasps, and also butterflies, but I regard this as a case where science is not strictly practical."

There is, of course, the danger, too, that children will not recognize the difference between the female of the Orange Tip butterfly, which is practically colourless, and the cabbage whites, and it would be worse than a crime to destroy so joyous and welcome a creature, whose advent is one of the pleasantest signs that summer is nigh at hand. I have watched these fairy sprites dancing along the hedge sides at Aldington year by year, and in May they were extraordinarily abundant here, happily coursing round and round my meadow, and chasing each other in the sunshine. The Orange Tip is quite innocent of designs upon the homely cabbage, the food-plant of the caterpillar being *Cardamine pratensis* (the cuckoo flower), which Shakespeare speaks of so prettily in the lines:

> "When daisies pied and violets blue,
> And lady-smocks all silver-white."

Possibly Hood was thinking of the Orange Tip when he wrote the lines that seem so well suited to them:

> "These be the pretty genii of the flowers
> Daintily fed with honey and pure dew."

A story is told of an undergraduate who united the hind wings of a butterfly to the body and fore wings of one of a different species, and, thinking to puzzle Professor Westwood, then the entomological authority at Oxford, asked if the Professor could tell him "what kind of a bug" it was. "Yes," was the immediate reply—"a humbug!"

One of my schoolfellows, a boy about eleven, at Rottingdean school, and quite a novice at butterfly collecting, met a professional "naturalist" on the Warren at Folkestone, who inquired what he had taken. "Only a few whites," said the boy. The man looked at them and, eventually, they negotiated an exchange, the boy accepting three or four others for an equal number of the whites. On reaching home he found that he had parted with specimens of the rare Bath White, *Pieris daplidice*, for some quite common butterflies. The Bath White is not recognized as a British species, Newman supposing the specimens taken in this country to have been blown over or migrated from the northern coast of France, as they have been rarely met with away from the shores of Kent and Sussex.

It is surprising to find so many people who seem unable to exercise their powers of observation to the extent of noticing the butterflies they daily pass in the garden, or along the roads. One would expect that the marvellous colouring of even our common butterflies would arrest attention, and that interest in the names and life-history would follow.

In June in the Forest the rather alarming stag-beetle is to be seen on the wing on a warm evening; though really harmless, its size and habit of buzzing round frightens people who are not acquainted with its ways. They are called locally, "pinch-bucks," as their horns resemble the antlers of a buck, and they can nip quite hard by pressing them together. I once saw a fight between a stag-beetle and a toad, it had evidently been proceeding for some time as both combatants were exhausted, but neither had gained any special advantage.

CHAPTER XXIV

CYCLING—PAGEANTS OF THE ROADS—ROADSIDE CREATURES—HARMONIOUS BUILDING—COLLECTING OLD FURNITURE AND CHINA

> "I may soberly confess that sometimes, walking abroad after my studies, I have been almost mad with pleasure—the effect of nature upon my soul having been inexpressibly ravishing and beyond what I can convey to you."
> —JOHN INGLESANT.

I SUPPOSE that the bicycle has given, and gives, as much pleasure to fairly active people as any machine ever invented. I must have been one of the first cyclists in England, as my experience dates from the days when bicycles were first imported from France. The high bicycle appeared later, but the earlier machines were about the height of the present safety, with light wooden wheels and iron tyres. The safety, with pneumatic tyres, did not arrive till nearly thirty years later, and it was the latter invention that brought about the popularity of cycling.

The difference between cycling and walking has been stated thus: "When a man walks a mile he takes on an average 2,263 steps, lifting the weight of his body with each step. When he rides a bicycle of the average gear he covers a mile with the equivalent of 627 steps, bears no burden, and covers the same distance in less than one third of the time."

People constantly tell me that cycling is all very well for getting from place to place, but otherwise they don't care about it, which I can only account for by supposing that they find it a labour more or less irksome, or that they have never developed their perceptive faculties, and have no real sympathy with the life of woods and fields or the spirit of the ancient farms and villages.

Cycling to me is a very easy and pleasant exercise, but it is far more than that; it is like passing through an endless picture-gallery filled with masterpieces of form and colour. The roads of England not only present these delights to the physical sense, but they stir the imagination with historic visions from the earliest times. There are the ancient camps, now silent and deserted, which become at the bidding of fancy peopled with the unkempt and savage British, and later with their well-disciplined and well-equipped Roman conquerers: archers and men in armour appear; pilgrims' processions such as we read of in Chaucer; knights and ladies on their stately steeds. There are the ghosts of royal progresses, kings and queens, and wonderful pageantry gorgeous in array; decorously ambling cardinals and abbots with their trains of servitors; hawking parties with hawks and attendants; soldiers after Sedgemoor in pursuit of Monmouth's ill-fated followers; George IV. and his gay courtiers on the Brighton road; beaux and beauties in their well-appointed carriages bound for Tunbridge Wells, Cheltenham, or Bath; splendid teams with crowded coaches, and great covered waggons laden with merchandise; the highwayman at dusk in quest of belated travellers, and companies of farmers and cattle-dealers riding home from market together for safety.

I often see a vision here in the ancient Forest tracks of a gang of wild and armed smugglers, and among them still more savage-looking foreign sailors. They have two or three Forest trucks, made especially to fit the ruts in the little-used tracks, laden with casks of spirits and drawn by rough Forest ponies. I can hear the shouts of the drivers as they urge them forward, and I can see the steaming sides of the ponies in the misty moonlight of a winter night. The spirits were landed at Poole or Christchurch, and they are on their way to Burley where, under the old house I bought with my land, there is still the cellar, then cleverly concealed, where the casks were stored in safety from the watchful eyes of the Excise; a quaint old place built of the local rock.

There is one vision of the roads in the Forest which nobody who saw it can ever forget: the companies of infantry, the serious officers, the ruddy-faced men, and the then untried guns of the glorious Seventh Division, on their route marches, with fife and drum to cheer the way with the now classic strains of " It's a long, long way to Tipperary." There are spots where I met them in the autumn of 1914 that I never pass without feeling that for all time these places are sacred to the memory of heroes.

Besides the fancied pageantry of the roads there are the natural objects of the woods, the lanes, and the fields; the blossoming hawthorn and the wild roses trailing from the hedges, the hares and rabbits, the birds, the butterflies, and the flowers; sturdy teams with the time-honoured ploughs and harrows, the sowing of the seed, the young gleaming corn, the scented hayfields or the golden harvest; every man at his honourable labour, happy children dashing out of school; noble timber, hazel coppices, grey old villages; cattle in the pastures, or enjoying the cool waters of shallow pools or brooks; sheep in the field or the fold, the shepherd and his dog; apple blossom, or the ripe and ruddy fruit, bowery hop-gardens, mellow old cottages, country-folk going to market, fat beasts, cows and calves, carriers' carts full of gossips.

Pictures, real pictures, everywhere, endless in variety. Steady! go steady past these woods; see the blue haze of wild hyacinths, the cool carpet of primroses. Look at the cowslips yellowing that meadow; do you see the heron standing patiently in the marsh? Look overhead, watch the hovering hawk; hark! there is the nightingale. Stop a moment at the bridge; can you see the speckled beauties with their heads upstream? Thank God for the blue, blue sky! thank God for the glory of the sun, for the lights and shadows beneath the trees! Thank God for the live air, the growth, the life of plant and tree, the fragrance and the beauty! Thank God for rural England!

One can tell the most ancient, apart from the scientifically made Roman roads, by the way they were worn down from the original level, especially on hillsides, by the constant and heavy traffic. Every passing wheel abraded a portion of the surface, and the next rain carried the *débris* down the hill, forming in time a deep depression, between banks at the sides, often many feet deep, and giving the impression of the track having been purposely dug out to lessen the gradient. In places where the road became impassable from long use and wet, deviations on either side were made, so that ten or a dozen disused tracks can be seen side by side, often extending laterally quite a long distance from the existing road in unenclosed surroundings.

A great charm of the bicycle is its noiselessness which, with its speed, affords peeps of wild creatures under natural conditions. Cycling on the Cotswolds I came upon two hares at a boxing match; they were so absorbed that I was able to get quite close, and it was amusing to watch them standing upright on their hind legs, and sparring with their little fists like professionals. I have often seen the pursuit of a rabbit by a persistent stoat; the rabbit has little chance of escape, as the stoat can follow it underground as well as over; finally the rabbit appears to be paralyzed with fright, lies down and makes no further effort. Weasels, which probably make up for depredations of game by their destruction of rats, often cross the road, and sometimes whole families may be seen playing by the roadside. I was shooting in Surrey when I once had an excellent view of an ermine—the stoat in its winter dress. I did not recognize it until it was out of sight, but I should not have shot it in any case, for the ermine is a very rare occurrence in the south of England. I believe that further north it is not unusual, as is natural where the light colour would protect it from observation in snow, but as far south as Surrey this would be a danger, and I should scarcely have noticed it in the thick undergrowth had it been normal in colour.

We had a squirrel's nest, or " drey," as it is called, near my house last year, and the squirrels have been about my lawn and the Forest trees ever since. It was charming, in the summer, to watch them nibbling the fleshy galls produced on the young oaks by a gall-fly (*Cynips*). They chattered to each other all the time, holding the galls between their fore feet, fragments dropping to the ground beneath the trees. Squirrels are fond of animal food, and I wondered, as there was so much apparent waste, whether they were not really searching for the grubs in the galls. Of late years squirrels have been scarce here; they were formerly abundant, but their numbers were much reduced by an epidemic. They seem to be increasing again, possibly the felling of so many Scots-firs has driven them from their former haunts into adjoining oak and beech woods, such as those which almost surround my land.

During lunch in a meadow by the roadside, on a cycling ride, we found a snake with a toad almost down its throat; the snake disgorged the toad and escaped, but before we had finished lunch it returned and repeated the process. This time I carried the toad, none the worse for the adventure, some distance away, where I hope it was safe. Hedgehogs are said to eat toads, frogs, beetles, and snakes, as well as the eggs of game, to which I have already referred (p. 264); it is curious that the old name "urchin" has been superseded in some places by "hedgehog," but still survives in the "sea-urchin," and is also used for a troublesome boy.

It is very interesting, when cycling, to notice the changes in passing from one geological formation to another, and in railway travelling, with a geological map, one can quickly observe the transition; the cuttings give an immediate clue, and the contours of the surface and the agriculture are further guides. The alteration in the flora is particularly marked in passing from the Bagshot Sands, for instance, to the Chalk, or from the Lias Clay to the Lias Limestone or the Oolite; the lime-loving plants appear on the Chalk and Limestone, and disappear on the Sands and Clays.

The sunken appearance of the old roads is one of the best proofs of their antiquity, and one is inclined to wonder at their windings, but in following the tracks across the Forest moors one gets an insight into the way roads originated. The ancients simply adopted the line of least resistance by avoiding hills, boggy places, and the deep parts of streams, choosing the shallow fordable spots for crossing. The winding road is, of course, much more interesting and beautiful than the later straight roads of the Romans, though no doubt many of the former were improved by the invaders for their more important traffic. It is to be regretted that the formal lines of telegraph and telephone poles and wires have vulgarized so many of our beautiful roads, and destroyed their retired and venerable expression; more especially as in many places these were erected against the will of the inhabitants, and under the mistaken idea that the farmer's business is retail, and that he is prepared to deal in and deliver small quantities of goods daily, receiving urgent orders and enquiries by telephone.

The villages in the Vale of Evesham and the Cotswolds afford an excellent illustration of building in harmony with surroundings, and the suitability of making use of local materials. Thus, in the Vale we find mellow old brick, lias limestone, half timber and thatch; while on the Cotswolds, oolite freestone and "stone slates" of the same freestone seem the only suitable material. Where the ugly pink bricks and blue slates have of late years been introduced, they appear out of place and contemptible. There is an immense charm about these old villages of hill and vale, and it is curious to think that Aldington was an established community with, probably, as many inhabitants as at the present day, when London and Westminster were divided by green fields.

A story is told of the time before the line to Oxford from Wolverhampton and Worcester was built, when persons visiting Oxford from the Vale of Evesham had to travel by road. An old yeoman family, having decided upon the Church as the vocation for one of the sons, sent him, in the year 1818, on an old pony, under the protection of an ancient retainer for his matriculation examination. On their return, in reply to the question, "Well, did you get the young master through?" "Oh, yes," he said, "and we could have got the old pony passed too, if we'd only had enough money!"

Partly as an excuse for a bicycle ride I used often to visit distant villages where auction sales at farm-houses were proceeding, and sometimes I came home with old china and other treasures. Wherever there are old villages with manor houses and long occupied rich land, wealth formerly accumulated and evidenced itself in well-designed and well-made furniture, upon which time has had comparatively little destructive effect. As old fashions were superseded, as oak gave way to walnut, and walnut to Spanish mahogany, the out-of-date furniture found its way to the smaller farm-houses and cottages, in which it descended from generation to generation. Now that the cottages have been ransacked by dealers and collectors, the treasures have not only been absorbed by wealthy townspeople, but are finding their way with those of impoverished landowners and occupiers to the millionaire mansions on the other side of the Atlantic.

There is no limit to the temptation to collect when once the fascination of such old things has made itself felt—furniture, china, earthenware, glass, paintings, brass and pewter become an obsession. If I had only filled my barns with Jacobean and Stuart oak and walnut, William and Mary, and Queen Ann marquetry, and Chippendale, Sheraton and Hepplewhite mahogany, instead of wheat for an unsympathetic British public, and at the end of my time at Aldington offered a few of the least interesting specimens for sale by auction, I might still have carried away a houseful of treasures which would have cost me less than nothing.

An old friend of mine, who had been collecting for many years, and in comparison with whom I was a novice, though my enthusiasm long preceded the fashion of the last twenty-five years, told me that he once discovered a warehouse in a Cotswold village crammed with Chippendale, and that the owner, having no sale for it, was glad to exchange a waggon-load for the same quantity of hay and straw chaff.

Among the more interesting articles which my cycling excursions and previous pilgrimages on foot produced, I have a charming blue and white carnation pattern, Worcester china cider mug with the crescent mark. These mugs are said to have been specially made for the Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769 at Stratford-on-Avon when Garrick was present. The date corresponds with the time when the mark was in use, and establishes the age of the mug as 150 years. The china in my old neighbourhood was naturally Worcester, Bristol and Salopian, of which I have many specimens—of the Worcester more especially—ranging from the earliest days of unmarked pieces through the Dr. Wall period, Barr, Flight and Barr, down to the later Chamberlain.

An old pair of bellows is a favourite of mine; it is made of pear-tree wood, decorated with an incised pattern of thistles and foliage, referring possibly to the Union of England and Scotland in 1707, or as a Jacobite emblem of a few years later. The carving is surrounded by the motto:

"WITH MEE MY FREND MAY STILL BE FREE
YET VSE MEE NOT TILL COLD YOV BEE."

These old bellows show unmistakable signs of their more than 200 years of honourable service, and they have literally breathed their last though still surviving; but it would be sacrilege to renew the leather, and might disturb the ghosts of generations of old ladies who blew the dying embers into a ruddy glow when awaiting, in the twilight of a winter's evening, their good-men's return from the field or the chase.

One of my greatest finds was a pair of Chippendale chairs at a sale at Mickleton at the foot of the Cotswolds;

they belong to the early part of the Chippendale period, before the Chinese style was abandoned. That influence appears in incised fretted designs on the legs, and the frieze below the seats. The seats are covered with the original tapestry, adding much to the interest, and the backs present examples of the most spirited carving of the maker. At the sale, when I went to have a second look, I found two dealers sitting on them and chatting quite casually; the intention was evidently to prevent possible purchasers from noticing them, and more especially to hide the tapestry coverings. The value of the chairs immediately rose in my estimation, and I increased the limit which I had given to a bidder on my behalf, so that I made sure of buying them. The old chairs looked very shabby when they came out into the light of day, and they fell to my representative's bid amid roars of laughter from the rustic crowd. What a price for "them two old cheers"! they "never heard talk of such a job!" It would surprise them to know that I have been offered five times what they then cost.

My wife has had to do with many parochial committees from time to time, and I have often trembled for my Chippendale chairs when these meetings, accompanied by tea, have been held at my house, for it is not everybody who regards them with the reverence due to their external beauty and true inwardness, or who recognizes in them the

"Tea-cup times of hood and hoop,
Or while the patch was worn."

A very successful afternoon was one I spent at a sale at North Littleton. I remember the beautiful spring day, and the old weather-worn grey house in an orchard of immense pear-trees covered with sheets of snowy blossom. I secured a Jacobean elm chest with well-carved panels, a Jacobean oak chest of drawers on a curious stand, a complete tea set of Staffordshire ware, including twelve cups and saucers, teapot, and other pieces, with Chinese decoration; four Nankin blue handleless tea-cups, a Delft plate, and a Battersea enamel patch-box. My bill was a very moderate one, but the executor who had the matter of the sale in hand was well pleased that these old family relics had passed into the possession of someone who would value them, and not to careless and indifferent neighbours, and was more than satisfied with the amount realized. Next morning, as a token of his satisfaction, he brought me a charming old brass Dutch tobacco box, with an oil painting inside the lid, of a smoker enjoying a pipe.

I have seen some amusing incidents at sales of household goods in remote places; incredulous smiles as to the possibility of the usefulness of anything in the shape of a bath generally greeted the appearance of such an article, and on one of these occasions an ancient, with great gravity, and as an apology for its existence, remarked that it was "A very good thing for an invalid!" I am reminded thereby of an old-fashioned hunting man in Surrey, who was astonished to hear from a friend of mine that he enjoyed a cold bath every morning. He "didn't think," he said, "that cold water was at all a good thing—*next the skin!*"

CHAPTER XXV

DIALECT—LOCAL PHRASEOLOGY IN SHAKESPEARE—NAMES—STUPID PLACES

> "Our echoes roll from soul to soul."
>
> *The Princess.*

COMPULSORY education has eliminated many of the old words and phrases formerly in general use in Worcestershire, and is still striving to substitute a more "genteel," but not always more correct, and a much less picturesque, form of speech. When I first went to Aldington I found it difficult to understand the dialect, but I soon got accustomed to it, and used it myself in speaking to the villagers. Farrar used to tell us at school, in one of the resounding phrases of which he was rather fond, that "All phonetic corruption is due to muscular effeminacy," which accounts for some of the words in use, but does not alter the fact that many so-called corrupt words are more correct than the modern accepted form.

It is difficult to convey the peculiar intonation of the Worcestershire villager's voice, and the *ipsissima verba* I have given in my anecdotes lose a good deal in reading by anyone unacquainted with their method. Each sentence is uttered in a rising scale with a drop on the last few words, forming, as a whole, a not unmusical rhythmical drawl. As instances of "muscular effeminacy," two fields of mine, where flax was formerly grown, went by the name of "Pax grounds"; the words "rivet" and "vine," were rendered "ribet" and "bine." "March," a boundary, became "Marsh," so that Moreton-on-the-March became, most unjustly, "Moreton-in-the-Marsh." "Do out," was "dout"; "pound," was "pun"; "starved," starred. The Saxon plural is still in use:

"housen" for houses, "flen" for fleas; and I noticed, with pleasure, that a school inspector did not correct the children for using the ancient form. Gilbert White, who died in 1793, writes in the section of his book devoted to the Antiquities of Selborne, that "Within the author's memory the Saxon plurals, *housen* and *peason*," were in common use. So that Selborne more than a hundred years ago had, in that particular at any rate, advanced to a stage of dialect which in Worcestershire is still not fully established. Certain words beginning with "h," seem a difficulty; a "y" is sometimes prefixed, and the "h" omitted. Thus height becomes "yacth," as nearly as I can spell it, and herring is "yerring." "N" is an ill-treated letter sometimes, when it begins a word; nettles are always "ettles," but when not wanted, and two consecutive words run easier, it is added, as in "osier nait" for osier ait.

The word "charm," from the Anglo-Saxon *cyrm*, is used both in Worcestershire and Hampshire for a continuous noise, such as the cawing of nesting rooks, or the hum of swarming bees. Similarly, a witch's incantation —probably in monotone—is a charm, and then comes to mean the object given by a witch to an applicant. "Charming" and "bewitching" thus both proclaim their origins, but have now acquired a totally different signification.

There are an immense number of curious words and phrases in everyday use, and they were collected by Mr. A. Porson, M.A., who published a very interesting list with explanatory notes in 1875, under the title of *Notes of Quaint Words and Sayings in the Dialect of South Worcestershire.* I append a list of the local archaic words and phrases which can also be found in Shakespeare's Plays. This list was compiled by me some years ago, and appeared in the "Notes and Queries" column of the *Evesham Journal;* I think all are still to be heard in Evesham and the villages in that corner of Worcestershire.

Ship—sheep; cf. Shipton, Shipston, etc.; *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act I., Scene 1; *Comedy of Errors*, Act IV., Scene 1.

Falsing—the present participle of the verb "to false"; *Comedy of Errors*, Act II., Scene 2; *Cymbeline*, Act II., Scene 3.

Fall—verb active; *Comedy of Errors*, Act II., Scene 2; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V., Scene 1.

Customers—companions; *Comedy of Errors*, Act IV., Scene 4.

Knots—flower beds; *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I., Scene 1; *Richard II.*, Act III., Scene 4.

Talent—for talon; cf. "tenant" for tenon; *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act IV., Scene 2.

Metheglin—mead, a drink made from honey; *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act V., Scene 2; *Merry Wives*, Act V., Scene 5.

Handkercher—handkerchief; *King John*, Act IV., Scene 1; *King Henry V.*, Act III., Scene 2.

Nor never shall—two negatives strengthening each other; *King John*, Act IV., Scene 1, and Act V., Scene 7.

Contrary—stress on the penultimate syllable; cf. "matrimony," "secretary," "January," etc.; *King John*, Act IV., Scene 2.

To resolve—to dissolve; *King John*, Act V., Scene 4; *Hamlet*, Act I., Scene 2.

Strond—strand; cf. "hommer"—hammer, "opples"—apples, etc.; *1 King Henry IV.*, Act I., Scene 1.

Apple John—John Apple (?); *1 King Henry IV.*, Act III., Scene 3; *2 King Henry IV.*, Act II., Scene 4.

Gull—young cuckoo; *1 King Henry IV.*, Act V., Scene 1.

To buckle—to bend; *2 King Henry IV.*, Act I., Scene 1.

Nice—weak; cf. "naish"—weak; *2 King Henry IV.*, Act I., Scene 1.

Old—extreme, very good; *2 King Henry IV.*, Act II., Scene 4.

Peascod-time—peapicking time; *2 King Henry IV.*, Act II., Scene 4.

Was like—had nearly; *King Henry V.*, Act I., Scene 1.

Scambling—scrambling; *King Henry V.*, Act I., Scene 1.

Marches—boundaries; cf. Moreton-in-the-Marsh, *i.e.*, March; *King Henry V.*, Act I., Scene 2.

Swilled—washed; *King Henry V.*, Act III., Scene 1.

To dress—to decorate with evergreens, etc.; *Taming of the Shrew*, Act III., Scene 1.

Yellows—jaundice; *Taming of the Shrew*, Act III., Scene 2.

Drink—ale; "Drink" is still used for ale as distinguished from cider; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II., Scene 1.

Barm—yeast; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II., Scene 1.

Loffe—laugh; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II., Scene 1.

Leathern—(bats); cf. "leatherun bats," as distinguished from "bats"—beetles; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II., Scene 3.

Eaning time—lambing time; *Merchant of Venice*, Act I., Scene 3.

Spet—spit; cf. set—sit, sperit—spirit, etc.; *Merchant of Venice*, Act I., Scene 3.

Fill-horse—shaft horse; cf. "filler" and "thiller"; *Merchant of Venice*, Act II., Scene 2.

Proud on—proud of; *Much Ado*, Act IV., Scene 1

Odds—difference; cf. "wide odds"; *As you Like It*, Act I., Scene 2.

Come your ways—come on; *As You Like It*, Act I., Scene 2.
To sauce—to be impertinent; *As You Like It*, Act III., Scene 5.
The motion—the usual form; *Winter's Tale*, Act IV., Scene 2.
Inchmeal—bit by bit; *Tempest*, Act II., Scene 2.
Filberds—filberts; *Tempest*, Act II., Scene 2.
To lade—to bale (liquid); *3 King Henry VI.*, Act III., Scene 3.
To lap—to wrap; *King Richard III.*, Act II., Scene 1; *Macbeth*, Act I., Scene 2.
Bitter sweeting—an apple of poor quality grown from a kernel; cf. "bitter sweet"—the same; *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II., Scene 4.
Varsal world—universal world; *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II., Scene 4.
Mammet—a puppet; cf. "mommet"—scarecrow; *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III., Scene 5.
To grunt—to grumble; *Hamlet*, Act III., Scene 1.
To fust—to become mouldy; *Hamlet*, Act IV., Scene 5.
Dout—do out; cf. "don"—do on; *Hamlet*, Act IV., Scene 7.
Magot pies—Magpies; *Macbeth*, Act III., Scene 4.
Set down—write down; *Macbeth*, Act V., Scene 1.
To pun—to pound; *Troilus and Cressida*, Act II., Scene 1.
Native—place of origin; cf. "natif"; *Coriolanus*, Act III., Scene 1.
Sleek—bald; cf. "slick"; *Julius Cæsar*, Act I., Scene 2.
Warn—summon; cf. "backwarn"—tell a person not to come; *Julius Cæsar*, Act V., Scene 1.
Breese—gadfly; *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act III., Scene 8.
Woo't—wilt thou; *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act IV., Scene 13.
Urchin—hedgehog; *Titus Andronicus*, Act II., Scene 3.
Meshed—mashed (a term used in brewing); *Titus Andronicus*, Act III., Scene 2.

All the above words and phrases the writer has frequently heard used in the neighbourhood in the senses indicated, but to make the list more complete the following are added on the authority of Mr. A. Porson, in the pamphlet referred to:

Collied—black; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act I., Scene 1.
Limmel—limb from limb; cf. "inchmeal"—bit by bit; *Cymbeline*, Act II., Scene 4.
To mammock—to tear to pieces; *Coriolanus*, Act I., Scene 3.
To moil—to dirty; *Taming of the Shrew*, Act IV., Scene 1.
Sallet—salad; *2 King Henry VI.*, Act IV., Scene 10.
Utis—great noise; *2 King Henry IV.*, Act II., Scene 4.

Place-names everywhere are a most interesting study; as a rule, people do not recognize that every place-name has a meaning or reference to some outstanding peculiarity or characteristic of the place, and that much history can be gathered from interpretation. In cycling, it is one of the many interests to unravel these derivations; merely as an instance, I may mention that in Dorset and Wilts the name of Winterbourne, with a prefix or suffix, often occurs; of course, " bourne " means a stream, but until one knows that a " winterbourne " is a stream that appears in winter only, and does not exist in summer, the name carries no special signification.

One hears some curious personal names in the Worcestershire villages; scriptural names are quite common, and seem very suitable for the older labourers engaged upon their honourable employment on the land. We had a maid named Vashti, and she was quite shy about mentioning it at her first interview with my wife. In all country neighbourhoods there is a special place with the unenviable reputation of stupidity; such was " Yabberton " (Ebrington, on the Cotswolds), and Vashti was somewhat reluctant to admit that it was her " natif," as a birthplace is called in the district. Among the traditions of Yabberton it is related that the farmers, being anxious to prolong the summer, erected hurdles to wall in the cuckoo, and that they manured the church tower, expecting it to sprout into an imposing steeple! There is a place in Surrey, Send, with a similar reputation, where the inhabitants had to visit a pond before they could tell that rain was falling!

But perhaps the best story of the kind is told in the New Forest, where the Isle of Wight is regarded as the acme of stupidity. When the Isle of Wight people first began to walk erect, instead of on all fours, they are said to have waggled their arms and hands helplessly before them, saying, " And what be we to do with these-um ?"

Classical names are very uncommon among villagers, but in my old Surrey parish there was one which was the cause of much speculation. The name was Hercules; it originated in a disagreement between the parents, before the child was christened. The mother wanted his name to be John, but the father insisted, that as an older son was Noah, the only possible name for the new baby was

"Hark" (Ark). They had a lengthy argument, and there was no definite understanding before reaching the church. The mother, when asked to "name this child," being flustered, hesitated, but finally stammered out, "Hark, please." The vicar was puzzled, and repeated the question with the same result; a third attempt was equally unsuccessful, and the vicar, in despair, falling back upon his classical knowledge, christened the child Hercules. A few days later the vicar called at the cottage, and the mother explained the matter, relating how indignant she was with her husband, and how on the way home, "Hark, I says to him, ain't the name of a Christian, it's the name of a barge!"

CHAPTER XXVI

IS ALDINGTON (FORMER SITE) THE ROMAN ANTONA?

> "Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
> O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe
> Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!"
>
> *Hamlet.*

One of my fields—about five acres—called Blackbanks from its extraordinarily black soil, over a yard deep in places, and the more remarkable because the soil of the surrounding fields is stiff yellowish clay, showed other indications of long and very ancient habitation. Among the relics found was a stone quern, measuring about 21 inches by 12 by 7¾, and having, on each of two opposite sides, a basin-shaped depression about 6 inches in diameter at the top, and 2¾ inches in depth; also a small stone ring, 1¼ inches in diameter, and ⅜ths in thickness, with a hole in the centre ¼ inch across; the edges are rounded, and it is similar to those I have seen in museums, called spindle whorls. The quern and the ring I imagine to be British. This field and the fields adjacent on the north side of the stream formed, I think, primarily a British settlement and area of cultivation, afterwards appropriated by the Romans in the earliest days of the Roman occupation of Britain, and inhabited by them as a military station until they left the country.

Among other relics found in Blackbanks and in the fields to the north, called Blackminster, between Blackbanks and the present line of the Great Western Railway, aggregating about a hundred acres, there were found large quantities of fragments of pottery of several kinds, including black, grey, and red, and among the latter the smoothly glazed Samian. Many pieces are ornamented with patterns, some very primitive, others geometrical; others are in texture like Wedgwood basalt ware, and similar in colour and decoration. The Samian is mostly plain, but a few pieces have patterns and representations of human figures.

The fields, but especially Blackbanks, contained quantities of bones, the horns of sheep or goats, pieces of stags, horns, iron spear and arrow-heads, horses' molar teeth, and flint pebbles worn flat on one side by the passage of innumerable feet for many years. A millstone showing marks of rotation on the surface, a bronze clasp or brooch with fragments of enamel inlay, the ornamental bronze handle of an important key, a glass lacrymatory (tear-bottle), numerous coins—referred to below—and other objects in bronze and iron, were also found.

Only centuries of habitation and cultivation could have changed the three feet of surface soil in Blackbanks from a stiff unworkable clay to a black friable garden mould, and it is probable that the British occupation had lasted for a very long period before the Romans took possession. The settlement must have been a place of importance, because it was approached from the north by a track, still existing though practically disused, probably British, from a ford over the Avon, near the present Fish and Anchor Inn. This track passes to the west of South Littleton, on through the middle of the Blackminster land, and immediately to the east of Blackbanks, joining what I believe to be the Ryknield Street at the bridge over the stream on the South Littleton road. Near the present Royal Oak Inn it formerly crossed the present Evesham-Bretforton road, and became what is still called Salter Street. It appears to have given access to two more sites on which Roman coins and relics are found—Foxhill about 9½ acres, and Blackground about 4 acres—and passing east of the present Badsey church, proceeded through Wickhamford, and by a well-defined track to Hinton-on-the-Green, and on to Tewkesbury and Gloucester.

The occurrence of the name Salter Street gives a clue to one of the original uses of the road, at any rate in Roman times, for salt was an absolute necessity in those days, as may be gathered from a passage in *The Natural History of Selborne*, written in 1778:

"Three or four centuries ago, before there were any enclosures, sown grasses, field turnips, or field carrots, or hay, all the cattle which had grown fat in summer, and were not killed for winter use, were turned out soon after Michaelmas to shift as they could through the dead months; so that no fresh meat could be had in winter or spring. Hence the vast stores of salted flesh found in the larder of the elder Spencer in the days of Edward II., even so late in the spring as the 3rd of May." A note adds that the store consisted of "Six hundred bacons, eighty carcasses of beef and six hundred muttons."

It is not difficult to trace the route over which the salt was carried from Droitwich. Starting thence the track can be approximately identified by the names of places in which the root, *sal* (salt), occurs, and we find Sale Way, Salding, Sale Green, and, further south, Salford. Crossing the Worcester-Alcester road at Radford, and proceeding through Rouse Lench and Church Lench, we reach Harvington, from whence the track takes us across the low-lying meadows to the ferry and ford over the Avon, near the Fish and Anchor Inn mentioned above.

In recent times it has been assumed that the road from Bidford to Weston Subedge, known as Buckle Street, is identical with Ryknield Street, but I should prefer to call Buckle Street a branch of the latter only, for the purpose of joining Ryknield Street and the Foss Way near Burton-on-the-Water. I consider the real course of Ryknield Street to be as described in Leland's *Itinerary* (inserted by Hearne), Edition III., 1768, in which he quotes, from R. Gale's *Essay concerning the Four Great Roman Ways,* that "from Bitford on the southern edge of Warwickshire it (Ryknield Street) runs into Worcestershire, and taking its course thro' South Littleton goes on a little to the east of Evesham, and then by Hinton and west of Sedgebarrow into Gloucestershire, near Aston-under-Hill, and so by Bekford, Ashchurch, and a little east of Tewksbury, thro' Norton to Gloucester."

Such a course for Ryknield Street would make it the connection between the north, running through the Roman Alauna (Alcester) to Glevum (Gloucester). It must be remembered that there was, in Roman times, nothing at Evesham to take the road there, for Evesham did not exist as a town until long after the Romans left. Leland says that there was "noe towene at Eovesham before the foundation of the Abbey," which took place about A.D. 701, about 250 years later, and there was no road from Alcester to Gloucester except the one we are following.

Another important road passed the northern extremity of Blackminster and crossed the road just referred to so that the Blackminster area was situated at the junction. This was the old road from Worcester, passing the present site of Evesham a mile or more to the north, crossing the Avon at Twyford, and the Ryknield Street at Blackminster, and going onwards through Chipping Campden towards London.

The following passage in the *Annals* of Tacitus, Book XII., chapter xxxi., *Ille* (*Ostorius*) . . . *detrahere arma suspectis, cinctosque castris Antonam et Sabrinam fluvios cohibere parat*, which refers to the fortification of the Antona and Severn rivers by the Roman general P. Ostorius Scapula, has been the subject of various readings and controversy about the word *Antona*, no river of that name having been identified. The reading given above may not be good Latin, but the names of the rivers are quite plain. Another reading substitutes *Avonam* for *Antonam;* but probably Tacitus avoided the use of the word Avon because it was then a Celtic term for rivers in general, and confusion would arise between the Avon which joins the Severn at Tewkesbury and the Avon a little further south which runs into the Severn estuary at Bristol. To make his meaning quite clear he did exactly what we do now in speaking of the Stratford Avon (*i.e.*, river) and the Bristol Avon (*i.e.*, river) when he prefixed *Antonam* (*et Sabrinam*) to the word *fluvios*.

If, therefore, we can find a place of importance with the name of Antona, or a name that may fairly represent it, having regard to subsequent corruptions, existing also in Roman times on or near the Avon branch of the Severn, we shall be justified in assuming that this particular Avon was the river he had in his mind. Such a place is the area I have described as full of traces of long Roman and pre-Roman occupation, situated at the junction of two ancient roads, very important from the military point of view, and within a mile of the Avon.

On the supposition that Antona and Aldington may be identical, the present site of the latter is perhaps a quarter of a mile from the Roman area which I have described, but the original Aldington Mill, traces of the foundations of which are still to be seen, was actually on the Roman area. A better position for it was found later, away from the difficulties of approach caused by floods, and it was moved to the site occupied by the present mill just below the Manor House, probably in Anglo-Saxon times. Although the name of the village became, in Anglo-Saxon, Aldington, or something similar, the old name of Anton or Aunton was evidently in common local use, as appears in the following list of names which the present village has borne at different times. It is specially interesting to notice that the more elaborate "Aldington" and its variants appear in the more scholarly records, such as those of Evesham Abbey and Domesday Survey, written by people not living in the village; while the parish churchwardens 1527–1571, the will of Richard Yardley 1531, the village constable 1715, and the villagers at the present day, all living in the place itself, carry on the old tradition in the names they use which approximate very closely to the Roman Antona, and are indeed identical in their manuscripts, if the Latin terminal *a* is omitted.

	Date
Aldintone, Charter of the Kings Kenred and Offa, possessions of Evesham Abbey	709
Aldingtone Aldintun Aldintona — Domesday Survey	*circ.* 1086
Aldringtona, An Adjudication; Evesham Abbey	1176
Aldetone, Institutes of Abbot Randulf, died	1229
Awnton, Will of Richard Yardley of Awnton	1531
Aunton, Churchwardens accounts	1527 to 1571
Anton, Old MS. " A Bill for y^{e} Constable "	1715
Alne or Auln, Villagers	present day

As parallels of the local persistence of old names, the neighbouring village of Wickhamford (present-day name) is still called Wicwon by the villagers, the same name under which it appears in the Charter of the Abbey possessions in 709. And the Celtic London still persists in spite of the Roman attempt to confer upon it the grander name of Augusta.

The disappearance of anything in the shape of foundations of former buildings is accounted for by the fact that the whole area was quarried many years ago for the building stone and limestone beneath, and any surface stone would have been removed at the same time. One of the fields still bears the name of the " Quar Ground," and the remains of lime-kilns can be found in several places.

It is right to add that Blackbanks as the site of Antona was suggested to me many years ago by the late Canon Winnington Ingram, Rector of Harvington; in discussing the matter, however, we got no further than the bare suggestion derived from the appearance of long habitation and the occurrence of Roman coins and pottery in Blackbanks only, and without reference to the much larger area of Blackminster. Canon Winnington Ingram was not familiar with the place, and I had not apprehended the importance of the track from the " Fish and Anchor " as a salt way starting from Droitwich, nor was I aware of Salter Street, its continuation after passing Blackbanks. Neither had I distinguished between Buckle Street as the junction between Ryknield Street and the Foss Way, and Ryknield Street itself as the direct road from the north through Birmingham, Alcester, Bidford, Antona (?) Hinton, and Gloucester.

Virgil, in his first *Georgic*, refers to the possible future discovery of Roman remains, and Dryden translates the passage thus:

> "Then after lapse of time, the lab'ring swains,
> Who turn the turfs of these unhappy plains,
> Shall rusty piles from the plough'd furrows take,
> And over empty helmets pass the rake."

Such is almost prophetic of my Roman site to-day; little did Virgil imagine that his lines would apply so nearly in Britain two thousand years later.

A LIST OF THE COINS FOUND AND NAMES OF THE EMPERORS TO WHOSE REIGNS THEY BELONG, WITH SHORT NOTES ON THE LEADING INCIDENTS IN CONNECTION WITH BRITAIN WHICH OCCURRED IN THEIR REIGNS:

1. A Denarius, 88 B.C.
2. A Denarius, 88 B.C. plated. As consular denarii passed out of circulation soon after A.D. 70, these two coins suggest that the site was under Roman influence by that date at the latest.
3. Claudius, Emperor (A.D. 41–54).
4. Nerva, Emperor (96–98).
5. Antoninus Pius, Emperor (138–161).
6. Marcus Aurelius, Emperor (161–180).
7. Severus Alexander, Emperor (222–235).
8. The Thirty Tyrants (211–284). Several coins of this period, badly defaced.
9. Etruscilla, wife of Traianus Decius (249–251).
10. Gallienus, Emperor (253–268).
11. Postumus, Gallic Emperor (258–268)
12. Claudius Gothicus, Emperor (268–270)
13. Tetricus, Gallic Emperor (270–273).
14. Tacitus, Emperor (275–276)
15. Diocletianus, Emperor (284–305).
16. Carausius, Emperor in Britain (286–294).
17. Allectus, Emperor in Britain (294–296).
18. Theodora, second wife of Constantius I. (Chlorus, Cæsar, 293–305; Augustus, 305–6).
19. Licinius, Emperor (307–324).
20. Constantinus Emperor (306–337); (Constantine the Great).

21. Coin with head of Constantinopolis (City Deity) (*circ.* 330).
22. Constantinus II., Emperor (337–340).
23. Constantius II., Emperor (337–361).
24. Gratianus, Emperor (367–383).

British Coin.

25. Antedrigus, British Prince (*circ.* 50).

The figures in brackets in the following notes refer to the coins as numbered in the above list:

(3) The Claudian invasion of Britain was begun in A.D. 43 by an army under the command of Aulus Plautius Silvanus. He led his army from the coast of Kent, where he probably landed, to the Thames, and waited for Claudius himself, in whose presence the advance to Camulodunum (Colchester) was made during the latter part of 43. Claudius apparently left Rome in July, and was absent for six months, but his stay in Britain is said to have lasted only sixteen days.

In the pacification which occupied the next three years there are two points of interest to notice. The first is a series of minor campaigns conducted by Vespasian—Emperor 69–79—who subdued the Isle of Wight and penetrated from Hampshire, perhaps, to the Mendip Hills. The second is the submission of Prasutagus, the British philo-Roman prince of the Iceni.

It is conjectured that his policy led a certain number of patriots under a rival prince, Antedrigus, to migrate towards the unoccupied west. A coin (25) of Antedrigus, with an extremely barbarous head in profile on the obverse and a horse on the reverse, was found on the Roman area at Aldington. The types of this coin are ultimately derived from those on the gold staters struck by Philip of Makedon, father of Alexander the Great. The original had a young male head (? of Apollo) on obverse and a two-horse chariot as reverse type. The influence came to Britain from Gaul, where the coins of Makedon may have arrived by the valleys of Danube and Rhine; but it is not improbable that the types reached Gaul through Massilia (Marseilles).

In 47 Plautius was succeeded by P. Ostorius Scapula, who pressed westwards and fought a great battle with the nationalist army of Caratacus in 51. Camulodunum became a colonia in 50, and the military organization of Britain then began to take shape by the establishment of four legionary headquarters—Isca Silurum (Caerleon-on-Usk), Viroconium (Wroxeter), Deva (Chester) and Lindum (Lincoln). This disposition, which faced north and west, came near to breaking down in 61, when the east rose under Boudicca (Boadicea), queen of the Iceni, partly in protest against the usury of Seneca, the philosopher and tutor of Nero.

(4) It was in the year 97, during the principate of Nerva, that Tacitus the historian was consul. By this time the IXth Hispana legion had been transferred from Lindum to Eburacum (York).

(5) Under Antoninus Pius a revolt of the Brigantes (between Humber and Mersey) was put down by A. Lollius Urbicus in A.D. 140. Lollius also completed the northern defences, begun by Hadrian, with a new wall further north between the Firth and the Clyde.

(6) While Marcus Aurelius was emperor, according to a tradition preserved by Bede, the British Church came into close connection with Rome and received what he calls a mission—more probably a band of fugitives from persecution. Though the tale is doubtful in details, it is evidence to show that Christianity was strong in the island by this time.

(9) Decius, husband of Etruscilla, was responsible for the great persecution of Christians in 250–51; the occasion was the 1,000th anniversary of Rome's foundation.

(10) Gallienus, son of Valerian, was entrusted with the west on his father's accession in 253 and defended the Rhine frontier until he was left sole Emperor in 258, when Valerian was captured by Shapur of Persia. Various usurpations compelled Gallienus to enter Italy, and he left the Rhine defences in charge of a general—M. Cassianius Latinius Postumus.

(11) Postumus at once had to face a great invasion of Franks. He gained some successes and was therefore proclaimed emperor by the armies of Gaul and Britain. Before long dissensions broke out in the Gallic empire and several commanders rose and fell in rapid succession. It is conceivable that some of these are represented in the coins found in Blackbanks, but these specimens are too badly weathered for certain identification to be possible.

(12) On March 4, 268, Gallienus was assassinated. His successor was M. Aurelius Claudius, afterwards surnamed Gothicus, a skilful general who did the empire great service by his victories over invaders from Switzerland and the Tyrol by the shores of the Lago di Garda, and over the Goths at Naissus (Nish).

(13) Tetricus is of interest only because his surrender to Aurelian in 273 marks the collapse of the Gallic empire.

(15–18) Diocletian became Augustus in 284, and co-opted Maximian as his colleague two years later. About the same time Carausius, commander of the Channel fleet, crossed to Britain and had himself proclaimed independent emperor. In 290 he was acknowledged as third colleague by the Augusti, but no place was found for him when in 293 the government of the Roman world was divided between Diocletian, Maximian, and two newly chosen Cæsars—Galerius and Flavius Valerius Constantius, later called Chlorus. By this arrangement the recovery of Britain from Allectus—who had murdered Carausius about 294—fell to Constantius, and he accomplished this by a sudden attack in 296. Constantius was twice married. His first wife, Helena, bore him a son, Constantine the Great; his second was a step-daughter of Maximian, named Theodora, to whom coin 18 belongs.

Britain was now divided into four Diocletian provinces, to which a fifth—Valentia—was later added when the country north of Hadrian's wall was re-occupied. The only other event of Diocletian's reign to be noticed is the persecution of Christians in which, according to tradition, St. Alban lost his life at Verulam about 303.

(19–20) On May 1, 305, Diocletian and Maximian abdicated. Constantius and Galerius now became Augusti. Trouble arose over the two vacant Cæsarships. It was the aim of Galerius to exclude Constantine, but the latter escaped to his father's camp at York, a few weeks before Constantius died on July 25, 306, after a victory over the Picts and Scots. Constantine was in power under various titles in Gaul and Britain for five years until, in 311, when Galerius died, he began his march on Rome, during which he is said to have had his vision of the cross with the words ἐν τούτῳ νίκα. In 314 the bishops of York, London, and some other uncertain British see attended the Council of Arles which sat to deal with the Donatist schism. The British Church was also represented at the Council of Nicæa, called by Constantine in 325 to consider the Arian heresy, when the Nicene Creed in its original form was authorized; the British vote was orthodox. It was Constantine who in 321 first made Sunday a holiday, but whether Christianity or Mithraism prompted him to this is doubtful.

(22–23) When Constantine the Great died in 337 the empire was divided between his sons. Constantius II. received the east; Constans, Africa, Italy, and the Danuvian region; Constantine II., Gaul and Spain. In 340 Constantine II. attacked Constans and was killed. Constans then ruled the united west; it seems that Constans and Constantius II. visited Britain in 343. Constans was assassinated in 350; this left Constantius II. alone. His policy of toleration towards the Arians led to a great Church Council in 359. The eastern bishops met at Seleucia, the western at Ariminum, where Britain was represented. By a certain amount of coercion Constantius forced his views on the Western Council. At this time the prosperity of Britain was great and corn was exported in large quantities.

(24) In 367 Valentinian I. made his son Gratian, Augustus. Gratian was later married to Constantia, daughter of Constantius II. Roman power was now

asserted once more against the Picts and Scots, and also against the Saxon raiders by Theodosius, whose son became Augustus in 379. Gratian himself was occupied on the Continent. In 383 Magnus Maximus was proclaimed emperor in Britain, and Gratian was murdered on August 25.

The coins were not a hoard; they were found all over the Roman area I have described, but especially in Blackbanks, and they became visible generally when the surface was fallow and had broken down into fine mould from the action of the weather. Their scattered occurrence, and the period they cover, suggest continuous habitation throughout the most important part of the Roman occupation of Britain, and, with their related history, they occupy a distinguished place in a record of the harvest of Grain and Chaff from an English Manor.

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